

MAUDE BAXTER

C. C. HOTCHKISS



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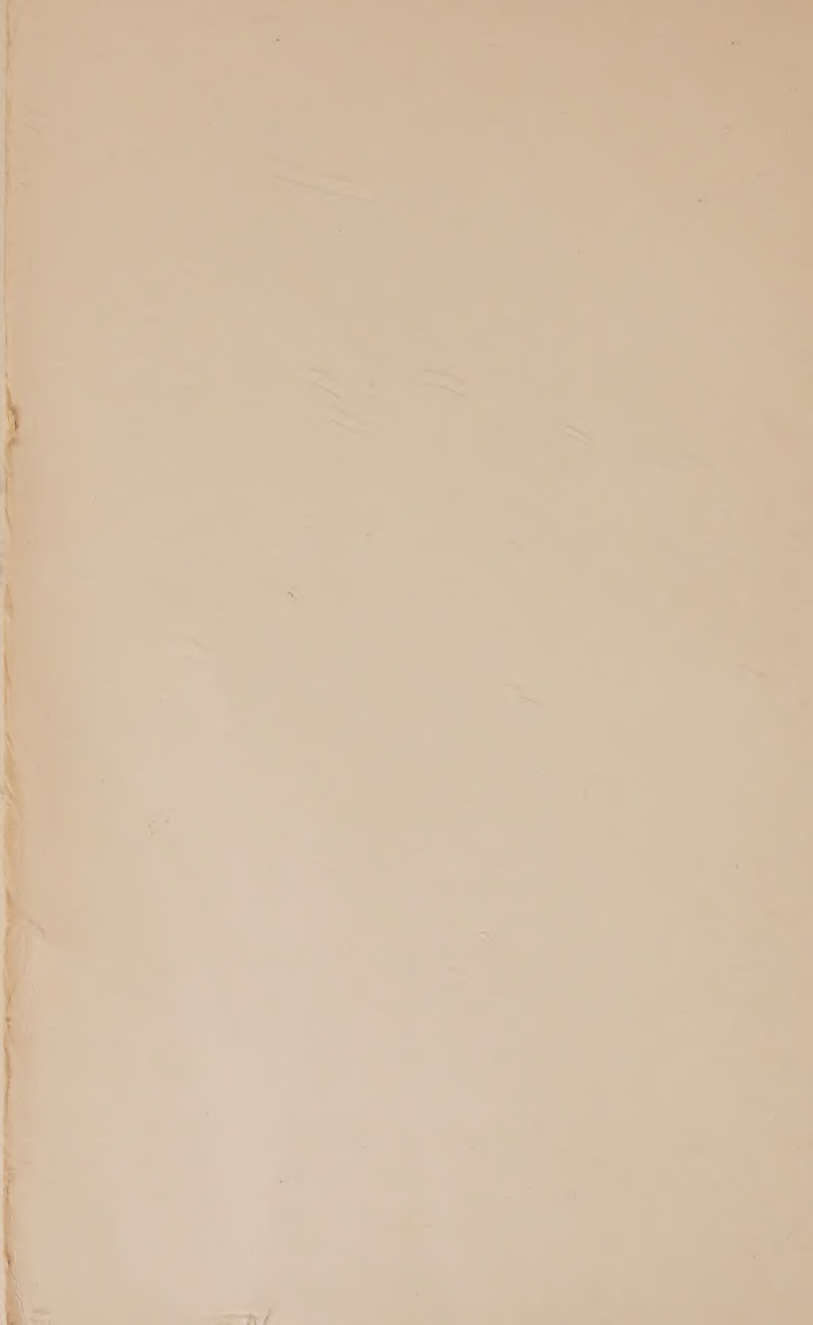
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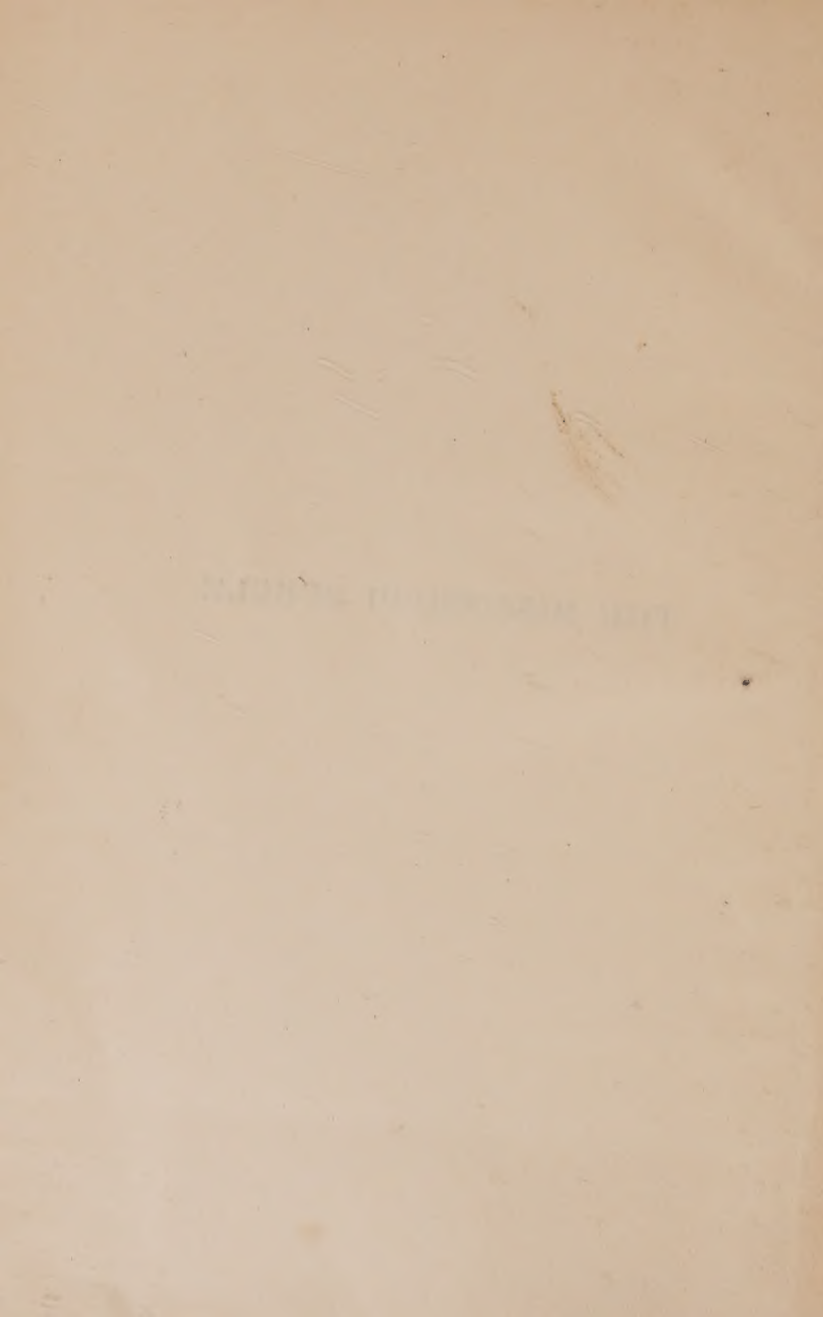
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WE SAT DOWN BY THE TABLE, THE GIRL CLOSE AT MY SIDE, AND I, WITH MY ARM AROUND HER, TOLD HER MY STORY.



THE MISSISSIPPI BUBBLE



MAUDE BAXTER

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TO MY SISTER,
TO WHOM I OWE MORE THAN I CAN EVER REPAY,
THIS STORY IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

MAUDE BAXTER

Maude Baxter

PROLOGUE

THE room was luxuriously furnished, and with a taste almost effeminate though an accent of masculinity was struck by the foils and fencing masks arranged on the walls, the spurs and riding crops, the several elaborately mounted swords, the pipe rack, and the like which go to give their peculiar character to the apartment of a young man of wealth and fashion.

Two men in early maturity sat at a table lately spread for a meal, but now among the disordered dishes were a number of pipes known as "church-warden" together with several delicate jars of tobacco, a half emptied decanter, and some glasses. The room was blue with tobacco smoke, and either man showed something of the effect of the unwritten dictum of their day which made it the privilege of every gentleman to become drunk at least once in twenty-four hours. One was evidently a visitor,

He was dressed in the uniform of His Majesty's Navy, and his red face betokened choler as well as good living. Opposite him, clad only in shirt and small-clothes, and lolling back in an easy chair, sat his host, one hand holding the traditional "yard of clay," the other nursing a fearfully black and swollen eye to which he frequently applied a cloth dipped in cold water.

"What was the cause of it?" asked the visitor, pouring himself a dram from the decanter after tossing his plumed hat to the unmade bed.

"And you have heard nothing?" exclaimed his host.

"Nothing — or almost nothing. I have been beset by duty and feel like a racer in the mews. I have had orders to go to America, and we are to sail within the fortnight. The pot is boiling in the colonies."

"Aye; and 'tis more than likely to boil over and scald the cook," was the languid reply. "'Twas those same colonies, or an egg hatched therein, that is accountable for my present beautiful appearance."

"And you look to have been manhandled, by my faith! I know nothing of the particulars, but hear you fell in with a clown from across seas."

"A clown! No, he was no clown. Think you

that I would lower my standing by such an encounter?" was the irritable rejoinder.

"Well, hardly, knowing you, Howard. But what was the end of it?"

"'Fore God, Bull! The end is not yet. We fight, of course. Dost think for a moment I would submit to such a matter as a blow from a low Colonial?"

"Low, is he? And how came you in his company?"

"By the mark now! But the recollection of it biases me; my temper makes me unjust. He is only low as all the scum yonder are low; low in his political tastes — and that's what started the fire. He came to Sir Robert with a letter of introduction endorsed by the Apthorpes of New York, who are kinsfolk of Dirck's, I believe. For Colonials, his family stands well enough. Did you never meet him?"

"Faith, no! Nor have I the desire. I hear he criticized the king."

"Aye, he did, and at my own table before a coterie of bucks I had invited to meet him. Of course during the evening politics came upper hand, and the fellow, he looks like an eagle with his hooked nose and piercing eye, made himself obnoxious in quoting the plebeian, Franklin. For a time I submitted, thinking it was but a matter of wine being in and wit

out, and then I protested. My dear Preston, he does not believe in the divine right of His Majesty, and had the effrontery to justify the mob of Boston and question the wisdom of the king in closing that port. Gad's life, sir! He had no more fear of expressing an opinion than though each man present thought as he did."

"And my lord — Sir Robert? Did he say nothing?" Bull leaned forward eagerly.

"My father was not there, but in his absence I felt called upon to act, or become the laughing butt of the regiment. I stood the matter as long as it became me, then called him what he was."

"Aye!"

"I submitted to the company that he was a liar."

"Aye! And then?"

"Well, i' faith, he knocked me into the dishes with as neat a blow as I ever knew delivered. That in my own house by my own guest! True it was we were all half drunk, though Marcy carried his wine well, but it is a thing no gentleman can forgive. I called him out, and we are to meet to-morrow morning. There you have the whole of it."

"'Fore Gad, but I wish I might have been present!" exclaimed Bull. "Who has the matter in charge?"

“Dirck, naturally. I left the room at once, of course, and have been mewed here since. Dirck sent me a line early this morning. It is all settled. Pistols, and in the park at seven. If he — What’s wanted, Pilcher?”

The speaker turned to the liveried footman who had appeared at the door:

“Major, Sir John Dirck is below, sir,” said the lackey, advancing a step and standing at “attention.”

“Show him up!”

Presently the announced officer entered the room, greeting the others as intimate acquaintances. He was clad in the undress uniform of a cavalry regiment, the scarlet coat making his handsome and aristocratic face appear pale. On his forehead stood great drops of perspiration.

“Glad to see you, my boy!” said the injured man, rewetting the pad and applying it to his blackened eye. “I received your note and — Why man you look as if you had seen a ghost!”

“Perhaps I have,” was the sober rejoinder; “and if so the ghost was yours, Howard.”

“Mine? Faith, the boy needs brandy! Preston, shove the decanter.”

“Nay, then! I mean no levity; I have scant time and less temper for it. I came to tell you that you

cannot meet Marcy. 'Fore heaven, Howard, you must not." His last words were forcible.

"In God's name, man! What has he done? Hast shown the white feather? Is he a coward and sent an apology?"

"Far from either is the fact," said the officer, dropping into a chair and wiping his forehead with a fine handkerchief. "I say you cannot fight him because — You have no objections to my speaking before Bull?"

"None in the world. Go on."

"Well, listen. After you left the room and matters had quieted a bit, I went to Marcy and stated the case. He received it as a piece of good news, drank off a bumper to your health as a man of spirit, and referred me to a fellow — a lawyer in the city — named Tarrant. He is a decent sort of a chap — the agent of Marcy's father, I believe. Together we arranged matters — pistols, and in the park, as you know; ten paces, and to-morrow, as you insisted regardless of your eye. So far so good.

"After writing to you I went to Farley's and from there to the club, having an engagement to luncheon, and who should I see among the bucks there but Marcy himself, and he seemed to care as little about what he said then as he did last night.

You'd have thought he hadn't a care in the world. I had considered him a fellow of ordinary ability, with scarcely more of schooling in gentlemanly art than would permit him to pass in a crowd.

"I was wrong in my estimate. In his way he is consummate. Of course the subject of the duel came up, and of course I kept aloof from the company though I saw and heard all that was going forth. Why the devil the fellow was not pitched out neck and crop is more than I can tell unless that the assemblage were afraid of his temper backed by his power."

"His power of what?" asked Bull, as Dirck paused.

"Ah! that is what I am getting to. Faith, Howard, between the drunken bragging of Forbes of the Sixteenth, and a quiet statement by Marcy himself, the two got to pistol practice on a candle set in the fireplace, and then your man did things to make the company open its eyes, and he was half drunk at that though it was hardly noon. At ten paces he snuffed the light six times in succession, and after, bored the wax from end to end, his ball taking the wick from it as clean as if the cotton had been pulled. 'Twas nothing short of marvelous!

"And that was not all. He shot each spot from

a ten of spades, without a miss, then split the card edgewise — at twelve paces — at twelve paces, man, and on the count of three. Once he did it at the drop of a napkin, and with the room so full of smoke that all was in a fog. Before he had done he might have insulted every man in the club and none would have resented it. He's a devil, Howard! You haven't a chance against him. I tried to make Tarrant see that a rapier was the tool for a gentleman, but he was obdurate, and within his rights, too, as the challenged party. But you cannot fight Marcy, Howard! 'Twould be suicide; and I take it you have no desire to leave Sir Robert childless! And you can't flunk. Lord above me! But I have grown old this day!"

As the speaker sank back and again wiped his forehead the others looked at him in consternation. It was Bull who first spoke.

"And would you have Howard beg that this wonderful marksman shoot but a button from his coat, and then declare his honor satisfied?" he burst out, jumping to his feet.

"Nay, I would not, Preston; nor would I have him made a target for a dead shot. Howard is no hand with a pistol, and he knows it."

"May not a chance hang on the toss for first fire?"

"Nay, again. It is arranged that they fire together at the drop of a handkerchief."

"Then what's to be done?"

"Nothing," put in the injured man, who had hitherto not spoken since Dirck began his story. His face had grown set but his hand did not tremble as he laid down his long pipe. "I must stand before my man, and if God wills it, be shot down by him. My father would disown me were I to act against the traditions of my house, and I would be drummed from society. I first insulted Marcy, who was being badgered to express his political opinions, a matter he was not slow about, and he properly resented being called a liar. I cannot run from him nor beg his pardon. The thing has gone too far."

Bull turned on him. "I'd have you publicly horsewhip the fellow and then refuse to fight him, he not being your equal." With that the naval officer walked to the window and began drumming nervously on the pane.

"And the motive would not be clear! Oh, would it not?" retorted Dirck, with a hard, mirthless laugh. "Howard has already challenged, and Marcy's standing is as good as yours or mine."

"A curse on the colonies!" Howard exploded. "Let me tell you, gentlemen, that I will not be the

only one to fall by the time we have whipped the Americans into a proper appreciation of their position. Bull has been ordered away, Jack. Mayhap he will know something of difficulty ere he gets back."

"All of which is beside the question," said Dirck, looking up wearily, "and that is: is there any way to prevent this meeting?"

"None whatever, unless my man should fail to appear," said Howard, reaching for the decanter. Bull swung around with a suddenness that showed he had an idea.

"Do you know anything of the cad's plans?" he asked, addressing Dirck.

"Only so far as being aware that he goes to Lady Brunswick's house to-night."

"And of course will leave there fairly late and fairly drunk. Will you be there?"

"I can, though her ladyship's table is like her politics: not to my taste."

"Curses on your tastes when so much hangs in the balance!" was the animated retort. "I have the solution! By the glory of the king, Marcy will not appear on the field."

Howard straightened himself. "What?" he exclaimed.

"I shall say no more," said Bull, running to the

bed and catching up his hat. "Dirck, a word with you outside. Howard, you'll excuse us. We have got to teach those fellows that an English gentleman has rights which a Colonial must respect. I have never seen this touchy Marcy, nor do I expect to, but the time is here when I can read him a lesson that will lower his spirit."

"What would you do?" demanded his host, jumping to his feet as Dirck moved across the room and Bull reached the door.

"Do!" said the naval officer, turning as he clapped on his hat; "nothing that you can control, my lad; yet enough to save your valuable skin, at the same time keeping your sensitive conscience clean. Neither you, nor Dirck, nor I, need be known in the matter. Marcy will not appear to-morrow, nor yet will he be bought off. Dost appreciate the ways of the sea, my lad? and hast ever heard the cry: 'ware the press-gang'?" And with a gay laugh Bull beckoned to Dirck and ran out.

When the two had gone the remaining man stood still a moment as if gathering the import of the words he had heard; then a light seemed to break on him. "Gad's life!" he muttered; "what a devil is Bull, and with what a quick brain! Well, it is not my doing."

And with an air of unfeigned relief, that abused English gentleman, scion of a noble house, dropped into the easy chair and again reached for the decanter.

CHAPTER I

FLIGHT

“**D**’YE mean to mutiny, you bearded villain?”
The eyes of the burly officer in command were fairly starting from his head.

“I mean I’ll not cat the lad,” I said as calmly as I could, being aware of my tragic position.

For there lay young Linton, seized to the grating, the white flesh of his bared back shining as fair as a girl’s through the gathering gloom. He was already half dead from fright.

And his was the only soul on board the *Dragon* that had approached my own, and now he was triced up for a flogging, more from the lieutenant’s spite than for any deserving; and I, because I was an open friend to the lad, had been maliciously selected to handle the cat. I would not do it; nay, though the *Dragon* sank, and my own life paid the forfeit.

I believe my answer so dazed the man — the enormity of a common sailor refusing to obey an order given by one of His Majesty’s officers — that he

could not for a moment speak, while a hush fell on the schooner's whole company.

I was standing close by the break of the poop, my arms folded, but my every muscle was at a tension. If worse came to worst, I knew what I would do. I should have done it before, but there had been no fair opportunity, and that the worst was about to come I knew by instinct, there being scant time to reason. It was going eight bells in the dog-watch, and every man belonging forward was on deck. It was darkening rapidly, the sea to the east being already black, but there was not an inch of way on the schooner, nor a breath of wind to wrinkle the polished swells that ran in from the ocean, lifted the vessel with a sidelong lurch and passed under, to break in foam and thunder on the Long Island coast, a mile or so to the north.

When in desperate straits one catches details which burn into the memory, and which, under ordinary conditions, usually make no impression; but even now as I write there comes to me a vision of the hairy chests of the men about me, their eelskin-cased pigtails curling clear of their red necks, the stripped boy triced, spread-eagle fashion, to the grating standing on edge, the dull red glow in the west, and the angry, scarlet-uniformed officer who had selected me to do

a deed that was wholly beyond either my will or intention.

Probably His Gracious Majesty, George III, had no servant more loyal than Lieutenant Preston Bull; nor had he one less blessed with tact and self-control. His choler was as touchy as powder, and at the instance of a foremost hand stating his own will he fairly exploded.

At my last words he whipped his cutlas from its scabbard and strode forward. I did not move; not because of my own bravery, but for the reason that I was stunned at my own temerity in flying into the face of marine discipline. Moreover, I had not reached the pitch whereat I become both alert and dangerous. Every man has that mark, can he but find it; but most men never do.

"What is your name?" demanded Bull, halting when he saw I did not flinch.

"They call me 'The Hawk,' sir," I answered respectfully, my arms still crossed on my chest.

"The Hawk, you scoundrel! Well, I know how to tame a hawk, ye high-nosed rascal! You were transferred here from the *Somerset*?"

"Yes, sir."

"Aye. I've heard of you and your temper. And your name is Marcy — Talbot Marcy?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you were pressed aboard while in London, some three years ago?"

"You have my history, sir."

"And you pretend to gentility?" he roared, curling his thick lip in a sneer.

"I am a gentleman, sir," I returned without passion, though I felt the blood mounting to my face.

"You are a bit of colonial scum," he vociferated, becoming more inflamed at my answers. "I know you, sir! You are a rebel at heart! You were a rebel in London, three years ago, when you masked as a gentleman and would have fought with the son of a nobleman! I stepped in there, you dog. The king should thank me that he has your service, for, by G—d! I marked you for the press. None of your fine airs with me, sir. Pick up that cat and give the man thirty lashes, or, by St. Paul, you'll get fifty yourself!"

I made no answer, nor a movement, for, in truth, I was thinking too fast. The past swept over me in a flood, and even as he spoke, recalling that September night when I had been a young fool, I fathomed something of that which had long puzzled me. It was the man before me who, by his own confession, was accountable for my servitude, and who gloated

over the fact. What could have been his animus? I had no idea, but a full and sudden hatred for him leaped on me, and I stood staring at him without either answering or moving, so stunning was the picture he had unfolded. Surely matters had come to a head with me, and it was for me to then cut the cord that bound me or forever submit to tyranny.

If Bull expected compliance, or even an answer from me, he was disappointed. Being officer of the deck and in full authority, I was perfectly aware that any step he took would be endorsed by Captain Blundel. His face was working with rage at the impudence of my refusal to obey him, and now my continued silence might have been construed into personal contempt, for with an oath he lifted his cutlas to strike me down. I never saw a face so inflamed by passion, and so abject had the crew become — so absolutely English in their subjugation to rigid discipline — that there was not even a murmur of protest against the threatened outrage.

But I knew perfectly well what I was about to do when the cutlas went up; indeed, there was but one action possible for me, and that I completed. My time had come; another opportunity might never present itself. Before the steel could descend, I had jumped to one side of Lieutenant Bull, and with

all the force of my right arm, backed by thirteen stone weight of body, a force not to be despised, I drove my fist into his thick neck.

I did not wait to see him fall, though I heard him crash to the deck. The next instant I was off the poop and into the vessel's waist, the crew parting before me.

From the deck I leaped to the breech of the cannonade amidships, from there to the bulwark, and thence headlong into the sea. It might mean death, but between being smothered in the deep, green brine, or dancing from the topsail yard, with my neck in a noose, there is much choice, and the latter would surely have been my fate had I remained on *H. M. Schooner Dragon*.

For the year was 1777, and I had struck a British officer. Moreover, I was of Colonial birth, and for two years England had been at war with her American Colonies.

From the moment I had brought myself into action there had been method in my apparent madness, and I had deliberately gone over the starboard rail that it might appear I had committed suicide, and nothing less — a matter fully justified after what I had done.

But suicide was the last thing I considered. True it was that I might fail to escape to the shore,

though I have swum three miles at a stretch, but to get there was my intention, though I did not wish it so to appear. Could I once throw them off the track the rest would be but a test of endurance.

Down I went, the air carried with my body roaring in my ears; but as I lost the impetus of the dive I struck for still deeper into the black depth, till, feeling sure I was below the *Dragon's* keel, I turned under her and came up well out from her larboard quarter.

By the sounds I then heard I knew that every man who could had rushed to starboard to see me come up and be shot. I heard voices and shouts and the scuffling of many feet, but could make out no words, and so I struck out quietly, though it was not long ere I heard the rattle of blocks as the falls were overhauled, and soon a boat splashed from the forward davits.

This did not greatly disturb me, for a man's head is not a thing easily picked out on a wide sea and in gathering night. I was a hundred yards away by the time the boat began to cruise for me, and it did not go far from the schooner; and when finally a flare was flung over the vessel's taffrail I was a cable's length beyond its light, swimming quietly on the long swells that lifted me with the regularity of a metronome.

I had passed one climax of my life, and now felt

so sure of my final escape, so self-satisfied, that I gave my thoughts to poor Linton and his fate, not dreaming that I would ever see the boy again nor by any possibility conceiving that he would or could ever requite me for my refusal to torture him. Probably every soul on the schooner thought me dead by this, but there was one whose eyes were later opened with a snap. I was ready to laugh at them all, if laughter had been in me, which it was not.

As I swam, with the water slithering past me, there was but one thing that obtruded itself in the way of possible trouble in the future. It was evident that Lieutenant Bull knew me. He had known that I hailed from the Colonies and had referred to a fight with a nobleman's son. Yet I was certain I had never seen the officer before I was transferred from the *Somerset* to the *Dragon*, though I, with the rest of the crew, knew he had come to the schooner from some ship-of-the-line. He must have acquired his knowledge of me long before, and I wondered how and what he knew of me; if he was aware that when I struck him and dashed for freedom I was within a few miles of my father's house.

The latter fact had been the most potent one in determining my act. Had it not been that the *Dragon* lay becalmed off Long Island and the night

at hand I doubt that I should have made a struggle for life. Desperate I had been for a long time, and always looking for a chance to escape, but had I flown into the face of authority on any other spot on the globe I might have acted as I had, only, I would have been hopeless and would have let the sweet brine take me to itself.

And now, would my father's house be searched and I dragged from it and taken to a fate regarding which there could be no doubt? This uncertainty worried me somewhat, but the present has its demands. When a man is swimming alone on a deep sea and far from land he thinks more of the passing instant than of days, or even hours, ahead.

Being at last well out of sight from the schooner I laid myself for a long voyage, taking it with little effort toward speed. I was not hampered by shoes nor by too many clothes, for though it was only early in May the weather was unusually warm, a precursor to the terrible summer of that year; and the sailor is never burdened with much toggery, and commonly goes barefoot on a vessel's deck.

So, without tiring myself, I put the fathoms behind me, the flare on the schooner fading at last; and in due time I heard the boom of the surf on the beach, and saw the flash of white water as the rollers gathered

to a head and broke. I felt myself lifted high on the swelling seas, and was finally caught in the rush of a royal visitor and hurled landward.

I had not been without experience in those very waters, and on that very shore; and I was young and strong, and, Heaven help me, I thought I was going home. It was that feeling that made my fight with the surf a pastime.

Something more than an hour from the time I struck Lieutenant Bull, panting from my struggle with the breakers and undertow, I sat on the wilderness of beach which skirts the southern shore of Long Island. Even the barren reach of sand appealed to me; it was the first of my own country on which I had planted my foot, it seemed for ages. There was a welcome in the light, wire-like grass on the dunes, and the surf, which erstwhile snarled, now sang a song. I was on my native soil once more, and my heart beat high enough.

And I had escaped from a servitude of three years, for it was in London, in 1774, that I was caught by the press-gang while returning at midnight from the house of a great dame — I, a gentleman by birth and estate; and neither prayers nor explanations had availed me in the least. I thought it strange that none of the rest of the party was taken, but in

the light of what I have since learned I wonder no longer. But now I was free, and I made up my mind it would go hard with any who again attempted to curtail my liberty. The *Dragon* might still patrol the coast, but I would no longer be obliged to lift my hand against my own countrymen. Perhaps I had been brave. God knows; it is not for me to say; but I know I had been desperate, and that had buoyed me, that and one other feeling, the strongest man may ever know. I mean, love for a woman.

Though there was but little comfort on the beach there would be enough of danger if I were found there; and in fact danger lay inland as well as here and on the sea. That Sag Harbor, which was not five miles from where I sat, was held by a detachment of British soldiers, I was well aware; for once we had touched at that port and my heart had turned sick as I looked at my native town from my prison of the schooner. I knew, too, that the place had been selected as a point for the gathering of British stores, being convenient to both Newport and New York, both ports now being in the hands of His Majesty's forces. For that matter, since the battle around Brooklyn the whole of Nassau was under the control of the enemy. On the entire island I knew no spot of safety for myself unless it was my father's house, and surely I

could not remain on the beach and let the dawn, and perhaps a boat from the *Dragon*, find me there.

I stripped, wrung out my scant clothing, and started for the only haven possible, and it was a rough journey in the dark. I knew nothing of the conditions I would find. I knew nothing of those I had left three years and more ago. I knew not even if my parent was alive.

And Dorothy! Had she lost faith and hope? What if she thought me dead, and had mar —

The word split in half on my lips. Now I knew the deepest animus of my daring.

I hurried onward, wading salt-marsh and inlet and falling often, but lost for a moment I was not. At last I struck dry land, and later the highroad. It was now close to six bells, or eleven o'clock, and I was becoming exhausted from lack of food and unwonted exertion, but it was with a feeling of boyish delight that at last I saw the roof of my father's house standing against the sky above the half-clothed trees.

In a moment I was over the garden wall, but there I stopped, held partly by that undeveloped sixth sense called intuition, and partly because of the single light shining from the unshuttered window of the "west room," otherwise the sitting-room.

CHAPTER II

THE RETURN

AS I stood there watching the window it came to me with a sort of sickening sense that perhaps the house was no longer my father's, and that, moreover, I was in a hostile country. In a vague way I had realized the former possibility, and the latter I had taken into account; but now both forced themselves upon me, possibly from the fact that I had not provided for either. As for the latter, it could not be an immediate menace. I had been, and technically still was in the king's service and in no danger as a rebel (though a rebel at heart I had always been), yet I was blacklisted as a deserter, and as such death would be my portion, if I were caught. But there was little chance of being caught that night; my fear at that moment was not for myself.

And here it was that I determined to act with caution, and so, instead of the joyous return I had so unthinkingly anticipated I became a sneak, aye, a sneak on the threshold of my own house, and the wave of depression that swept over me at that time

may well have been my spiritual warning of what was to follow. But I did not read the sign.

There was no altering the situation, nor doing aught but going ahead until I could arrive at the true status of matters, and so, like a thief, I crept to the open window, and carefully pulling myself up to the level of the sill, looked in.

At first glance I experienced a sense of great relief, for the appearance of the well-known apartment was all unchanged. The furniture was the furniture I had always known. There were the portraits of my father and mother, the latter long since dead; there was the stuffed eagle-gull I had shot years before and mounted myself; even the old queen's-arm hung in its place over the high mantel, and beneath it was the cutlas in the scabbard, which had been there as long as I could remember anything.

But it was not my father who sat by the table, the light from the whale-oil lamp lighting his face; nor was it Dorothy, my father's ward, my beloved, my betrothed, who sat opposite him.

Though I had not seen the man for ten years or more, I recognized him at once. He was my cousin, a Jersey Tory in the old days, who as a youth my father detested. He was about thirty-five years old,

or five years my senior, and a character so opposite my own that even meeting as boys we had never agreed. Fought we had, and often, and I, being his better in physique and possessing a quicker if not more venomous tongue, came off victor so many times that he must have hated me with the same vigor I did him. As young men we saw less of each other and had always met on neutral ground, but years had not increased my respect for him.

He appeared very much at home, dressed as he was in an old gown. The first I noticed about him was that his face was pale and carried a stubble of a week's unshaven beard, and that against the back of his chair rested a crutch. There was the old supercilious curl to his small mustache, and the same habitual frown of ill humor on his otherwise rather good-looking face.

What was Carey Drummond doing in my father's house?

On the other side of the broad mahogany table was the woman I had marked in my hope of seeing Dorothy. That she was Carey's sister I knew without guessing, though I had never seen her before in my life. She was a spinster of about forty. I would have sworn to her being a spinster, for every feature of sour maidenhood gone to seed was stamped

on her — from the little graying curls hanging in bunches in front of her ears to the high tortoise-shell comb sticking far up from the knot on the back of her head. Thin, angular, and sharp-featured, she resembled her brother as a caricature resembles its subject. He was almost handsome; she was repellent.

I searched the apartment for a familiar face and found none. Then something like resentment took possession of me, and softly sliding from my position I made my way to the garden-door and knocked loudly.

I had laid no plan of action; indeed, between the time of my drawing myself up to the window, and walking to the door, I had done nothing in the way of consecutive thinking. A knowledge of my father's whereabouts and condition, and a knowledge of Dorothy, were alike imperative, and there was but one way to become enlightened, and that one was to present myself as my father's son to the man who I felt would look upon me with but little favor.

But another and better way came in a flash of intuition which was probably molded by my own position as an outlaw. I would not be recognized. Years and my present rough costume would disguise me. Moreover, in defiance of the prevailing fashion,

I had not shaved, and for fourteen months my cheeks, lips, and chin had been covered by a curly black beard. It had helped to emphasize the peculiar cast of my features, and that, with my quick temper, had earned me the soubriquet of "The Hawk." No, I was not afraid that my cousin Carey would recognize me. My fear lay in what I might hear from him.

My knock was quickly answered by the woman, bearing a candle in her shaking hand. When she opened the door and saw me she started back with a catlike squeal, and almost dropped the light.

"Who be you? What do you want?" she demanded in a shrill treble.

I looked at her a moment, taking her measure by her voice and manner, and at once felt that mentally and physically she was inconsequential.

"Might this be the house of 'Squire Marcy?" I asked, striding past her that she could not close the door abruptly in my face.

"No, 'tain't. That is, 'tain't now. What do you want?" she returned, as if outraged by my action.

"I have a message from an old shipmate — his son," I answered, with a quick sinking of my heart; and without waiting to bandy words with her I turned and made my way to the west room, where in a mo-

ment I was standing by the table and opposite Drummond.

He did not offer to rise, but started and moved his hand to the crutch, and then I saw that one of his legs lay supported by a bench. Over the back of a chair in a corner was the red coat of a British officer, and behind it a sword in a shining scabbard leaned against the wall. I then knew that I had done a wise thing in posing as a stranger.

"What! Who are you?" he demanded, opening his eyes in astonishment, but sinking back in his chair as he looked around and saw I was alone and not aggressive.

"You will pardon my intrusion, sir," I said, bending over the table. "I have but a short time ashore, having overstayed my leave, but I have a message about one Talbot Marcy, late of the man-of-war *Somerset*."

"Talbot Marcy!" he said, with quick and unfeigned interest, as with a glance he took me in from my bare feet to my hatless head. "What of him? What was he doing on board the *Somerset*?"

"Faith, sir, he is not aboard the *Somerset* now"; I answered, while a sudden weight seemed to press on me, and I prepared myself for a blow.

"Then what in the devil is this about?" he de-

manded, in the impatient and ill-tempered manner I had known so well. "Out with your news of him and get yourself off. You are an impudent intruder, sir! What vessel do you hail from? and what have you to say that warrants your almost breaking into my house at this hour?"

My house! Aye, it was as I had feared. My father was no longer there. My gorge rose against the man, but I put a restraint on my rising temper and answered with an air of submission.

"He was pressed aboard the *Somerset* three years ago, sir, while in London, and my message is for his father."

Drummond swung away from me then as if a latent doubt or fear had vanished. "Well, his father is dead and under ground these ten months past. Go look for him in hell. Who are you, fellow?"

And this was my homecoming. The blow of his answer well-nigh knocked me from my feet, and I fairly staggered backward. But, for all that, the information had not been unexpected. I had felt it in my heart, and knew I had been hoping against hope. I knew it for the reason that the coward would not have had the effrontery to have adopted his tone had it been otherwise. And what of Dorothy? I dared not ask both in fear of the answer

and the fact that a reference to her might arouse the suspicion of the cur who appeared to exult in my father's death. Look for my parent in hell! Truly, Carey Drummond had never been in greater danger of his life at my hands than he was at that moment; but I could not avenge the insult then.

It still behooved me to carry out the part I was playing, for I recognized I was on mighty ticklish ground and would have trusted to the mercy of an angry rattlesnake as quickly as I would my cousin. Therefore, with an effort I pulled myself together and answered, though with little spirit.

"I am on shore leave from the *Dragon*, sir, His Majesty's patrol schooner, as mayhap you know. Marcy was aboard, having been transferred. It was yesterday he tried to escape by swimming, but he was drowned, poor lad. He had told me of his home here. Mayhap you are his brother, sir?"

I marked my cousin's face change as I spoke. It became less ugly in expression and held an air of perplexity — possibly of sorrow for my supposed fate, though the latter were hard to believe.

"Drowned — and yesterday, you say?"

"Aye, sir; and I made bold to come and tell you, though belike you will learn of it through the authorities. And doing so, sir, I overstayed my leave,

which will go hard with me on the morrow. I am well spent, sir. For the sake of the lad would you mind giving me a bite of victuals? I am faint with hunger."

Which last was no less and no more than the truth. In the face of the blow I had received I had little of the craving known as appetite, but, being turned from my home, I was aware I had hard days in store in my efforts to keep my neck from being stretched, and sustenance was as necessary as breath.

Drummond did not answer me, but turned his head toward his sister, who stood listening in the doorway.

"Deborah, is Rance back yet?"

The name of Rance stirred me. It came like a breath of fresh air to a suffocating man, and was the only welcome word I had heard since entering the house. Rance was the faithful servant, once a slave, whom my father had freed years before. As a lad I had played with him, and loved his black face with a love perhaps largely born of his past worship of me. Here was a ray of hope — a possible life-buoy to a drowning man. I hung on the woman's answer.

"No. Nor the lazy nigger won't be back to-night; you can depend on that," was the waspish reply.

"Then take this man to the kitchen. He is an honest sailor, and brings sorrowful news. Give him food, what you have about, then come back to me."

There was a peremptory tone to the order, and by its unquestioned obedience I knew that Carey Drummond had his sister well under his control.

Like the abject product of strict discipline I posed as, and glad enough to get from under the man's eye, I followed the rustling little figure into the kitchen where every object was alive with association. It was all I could do to command myself as the familiar and even hallowed place received me. The woman—I can never call her 'cousin'—served me bountifully enough and I, being of an age, size, and state of health demanding meat, ate with a zest and a return of spirits that was wonderful, all things considered.

Sullenly enough this dried-up maiden performed her office, and with many a contemptuous toss of her head, then she left me to myself, and obedient to her brother's command, returned to the west room. As I ate I thought, and the more I thought the more I doubted both of my relatives, for all that Carey had called my news sorrowful. Why sorrowful to him? I wondered. Had he ever favored me? Not once in his life. What then did he mean? Was he try-

ing to act the hypocrite to his sister? Hardly. Deborah probably knew her brother, and in any event she was not a character one would exert himself to deceive; she was too easily brushed aside. I was far from sure I had hoodwinked my cousin; and if not?

I silently left the table and tiptoed up the passage and had a look into the room I had left. The two were sitting close together, he writing rapidly on a paper held on a book; and she with her bony elbows on her bony knees, with fingers interlaced beneath her chin, sat watching him in a sort of dumb worship. There was nothing I could take exceptions to.

I went back to my meal and ate till the last crumb was gone, and was about to return to the sitting-room and humbly beg for lodgings in the barn, when, as I got to my feet, I heard the garden-door softly close. It was purely the intervention of Providence that made me go to the window and look out, and I was just in time to see the meager figure of Deborah on the path, and she was hurrying along, the pierced tin lantern she held bobbing like a demented will-o'-the-wisp.

Suddenly I awoke to the fact that I had been a fool, while in the strength of what I had eaten I resolved to be a fool no longer; for the possible meaning of her being abroad and in haste at such an hour

was brought to me with the certainty of fact. I must work quickly.

Leaving the window, I went swiftly across the kitchen, my bare feet making no sound, then through the dairy opening therefrom, and out at the little door at its end, and about which as a boy I used to play. I guessed where she was going, and by what route, and casting the die of chance I ran through the stable-yard and headed her on the path leading to the pasture. She was evidently taking a short cut to the village, some half a mile away.

As I came out from behind a bush and appeared before her she gave a little squeal in lieu of a scream, and dropped the light, at the same time clutching her flat breast; and then I knew I had made no mistake. I picked up the lantern before its candle went out.

“Madam, if you please, or if you don’t please, I will have that little note you carry.”

I spoke quietly, but with enough force to cause her to tremble all over. She was no actress; she clutched the front of her dress all the tighter.

“Go ’way, sir,” she said, shaking her little bunched curls. “Would you rob a lady?”

“Aye, of that note I would.”

“And if I have no note?”

"But you have."

"But I won't give it to you."

"Then I shall certainly take it. I give you warning, Mistress Drummond, and if you scream I shall stop you. Do you take me for an idiot?"

"You — you villain!" she sputtered. "You are a deserter from the king's ship."

"So much the more will I have the note, or you the consequences. By the Lord, madam, you are dealing with a desperate man! If you don't wish violence you will hand it over."

"Take it then," she snapped, drawing a folded paper from her bosom and throwing it down with a stamp of her foot. Then she turned to run, but I had her by her thin arm ere she had gone two steps.

"One moment, if you please," I said, stooping for the paper.

She set her uneven teeth together and stood like a post, while I unfolded the scrap and read by the light coming through the pierced tin. The paper ran:

"To Captain Archibald Harvey:

"Come to my house at once with a file of men. I have a desperate party here, whom I believe to be a deserter, and who may be a rebel spy. He is dis-

guised as a sailor. I will hold him as long as possible. He is unsuspecting of my doubts of him. Bearer will give particulars.

“C. D.”

Unsuspecting, ha! If ever I read the finger of divine Providence, and understood its pointing I did at that moment.

“You were to take this to the barracks, yonder, madam?” I asked the woman.

“I shall not answer you. It is none of your business, sir.”

“You will find it very much my business — as will the one who wrote this.”

“How dare you?” she said, shaking with anger. “What are you going to do?”

“Take you back whence you came;” I answered shortly, and again I grasped her bony arm and fairly dragged her as I strode along.

There was mighty little deference about me, as I entered the house the second time. I went straight to the room where Drummond still sat. Pushing the woman in ahead of me, I closed and locked the door of the room, placing the key in my pocket, then marched up to the wonder-stricken invalid in his chair and thrust the open letter in his face. I was hot enough then.

"Read that, Carey Drummond!" I said.

He looked up, startled by my sudden entry, and I marked his hand go to his crutch; but it did not reach it, for as he saw the paper and grasped the situation, his pale face turned chalky and he appeared to collapse in his chair.

CHAPTER III

THE LURE

“**W**HAT — what is the meaning — the meaning of this?” he tremblingly demanded, his sudden fright giving him a greenish hue.

“It means that I have blocked you in one of your dirty tricks, my loving cousin,” I said, holding back my rage as I went to the window and drew closed the solid shutter. I wanted no prying eye on me then. “It means,” said I, returning to him and picking up the paper which I put in my pocket, “that you will not get another chance at me.”

He sat up and stared at me, his mouth working, then in real or simulated surprise he grasped the arms of his chair, leaned forward and almost shouted: “By heaven! You are no sailor! I know you now despite your beard.”

“Aye,” I returned; “and you knew me from the first. And knowing me you sent your sister for the guard. Forget not, Carey, that I know you; and by the Lord Harry! if I suffer — if this house

is beset while I am in it, I will see that you suffer before I am taken. Mark me well."

At that I looked to see him fall into one of his old fits of anger, but in place of becoming violent a change appeared on his face — a change that was wonderful. His white countenance still showed a mixture of surprise, anger and fear, but fear alone finally predominated and he fairly cringed before me in his physical helplessness, though I have small doubt he would have shot me had a firearm been handy, a possibility I had held an eye to. As for any other form of aggression I feared little from him; there was no sturdiness about him; he was a sick man; and this knowledge gave me additional confidence.

His breath was coming short and quick as we two looked at each other, he with his brain working fast, as I now know, but he made no movement. When he had gathered his wits and his wind together, he spoke, but now there was no snarl to his voice; it was almost kindly.

"As heaven is my witness," he said, "I have no enmity against you, Talbot. Why should I have? It is ten years since we met. I thought you a deserter. Consider how you came in. If you need help, I am ready to help you, if I can."

"I am a deserter," I returned. "Let that be enough. I told you the truth — all save that about my death. I swam from the *Dragon* this night. And now don't lie to me. Is my father dead?"

"Yes."

"And so I am to seek him in hell, am I? he, whose little finger was worth your whole carcass. Where is Dorothy?"

"I believe — or at least I know, she is in New York," he answered, after a brief hesitation, meanwhile looking me squarely in the eye. I was about to make a return when I marked Deborah get from the chair into which she had dropped when I thrust her into the room. She had not spoken a word; now she went softly behind me and approached the window.

"Madam," said I, wheeling on her, "return to your seat. If you attempt to leave this room or give an alarm I will be obliged to treat you in a manner repugnant to us both."

"You are a brute!" she snapped, her black eyes flashing; but she went back to her chair and settled herself with the bounce of an insolent child.

"You say that Dorothy is in New York," I said, returning to Drummond. "What else do you know of her? Is she well? Does she think me dead?"

"I know that she thinks you dead — to her," he answered, quickly enough. "For three years she has not heard from you. She believes you to be faithless."

"You are a liar," I thundered. "She is no fool. Would she think me alive and faithless to my father also? What motive is behind this? Come, sir."

Drummond held up a white hand in deprecation.

"Don't, Talbot, don't! I am a sick man. I was wounded last August in the action round Brooklyn."

"Then you are a British officer?"

"Yes. Invalided home."

"And you call this your home! Then where is mine?"

He shifted uneasily in his chair.

"Your father willed the estate to Dorothy — that is, on the supposition that you were dead and had left no issue. I will be frank, Talbot. I will show you your father's last testament. Deborah, go to my room and —"

"The lady shall remain where she is," I replied. "Go on. It is Dorothy's house — her estate — supposing my death. But what are you doing here?"

The man became palpably uneasy, and for a moment did not answer. That there was some deviltry

afoot I had small doubt, but I could not fathom the true nature of it. I stood over him and waited until he was ready to speak, and might have then known, as I knew later, that he was cudgeling his brain for an answer to lead me astray. That his wit was not ready enough was my good fortune, and he uttered more than half the truth because at that juncture the devil deserted him.

“You see, Talbot, I — we — all of us believed you dead. Nothing had been heard of you, and when your father died Dorothy was alone in the world. She was naturally heart-broken by your apparent desertion, and came to me for advice — as why should she not? I stood almost as a relative and she has neither kith nor kin. I advised her for her own good. We became friends, and after my wound permitted me to travel she insisted that I be brought here. She then sent for Deborah to nurse me, she being forced to go to New York. We saw much of each other for a time — and then —”

He hesitated, and stopped without coming to a point, and at that, a hellish suspicion leaped on me. “Well?” said I.

He made no answer, but his silence was enough. Rising in wrath, I stepped up to him.

“And you, you hound! Have you married her?”

He thought I was about to strike him and he threw up both hands.

"No, Talbot, no! I have no claim on her. It is another — a man — an officer in New York. But yours is the right."

"Is she married?"

"No, only betrothed."

"To whom?"

"To a Sir John Dirck — a major in the army. Have you no faith in me, Talbot? Why should I wish to deceive you about Dorothy or aught else? I spoke but lamely because I would not give you pain, and I will help you right this wrong, if you will but trust me."

I know not how I might have answered, but at that moment there came a rap on the door I had locked, and then I remembered that in my rage I had neglected to even close either the side door or that to the garden. For me the interruption argued for but one thing. Somehow I had been betrayed, and having no idea of being taken without resistance, yet wondering how my presence could have become known abroad, I sprang for the sword I had seen behind the chair, and drawing the blade, sprang back and stood over Drummond.

"If you give an alarm," I whispered, "I will cut

you down where you sit, as sure as the Almighty made little apples. Ask who is there, and do it quietly."

"'Tis doubtless Rance," he said, quite calmly. "I know his knock. Dost think I would allow you to suffer?" And he inquired who was without.

He was right. I had done him an injustice. It was Rance come to report his return, and his voice, as he answered, was like balm to my strained nerves. I let him into the room and in a moment made myself known to him, whereat his joy was so great that he fell at my feet and grasped my knees, his eyes streaming with tears, as he welcomed me back from what he considered the grave.

But he guessed nothing of the tension of the situation, though he eyed my sailor costume in open wonder, and, when he had explained his delay in returning, he was sent to his quarters.

The negro's appearance had caused a diversion, and one had been needed. It gave me time to think, and I decided on one matter, at least. Of Rance I had no fear; nay, I would have trusted him farther than I would many who considered themselves his betters, but it came to me then that perhaps headlong honesty was not the best policy to use toward my cousins. Carey had offered friendship, and mayhap

it were better to let him think I had gained faith in him, and then keep my eyes and wits about me. Dorothy was beyond my reach, and there was no telling when or how I might see her, therefore I could lose nothing by putting on the mask of conciliation to my cousin, and playing with him the game I was convinced he was trying to play with me.

Therefore I mended my manner and tone, doing my best to keep down any air of suspicion, and though I now neither locked the door nor appeared to care for the woman's actions, I was none the less vigilant. I even used policy enough to apologize for my former violence under the plea of fear and necessity, but I was careful to ask no questions that would tend to embarrass Drummond, nor did he attempt to probe my affairs save to sound my politics, in which I so bore myself that I fancied he had no notion of my real sentiments.

It was a short session after the negro had gone. I think that nature was well nigh exhausted in the remaining three of us and that my cousins, or at least Carey, was glad of the truce. It was I who finally suggested closing the house for the night, and I even went so far as to assist the man up the stairway, he being fairly helpless. I had no fear of his

sneaking out and giving an alarm, though at heart I little doubted his will, but to guard against Debby's treachery I saw her to her room, then laid myself on the hall floor and across her doorway, and there slept as peacefully, though as lightly, as a cat.

Before I slept I took much thought, and to this effect:

To remain in Sag Harbor under the circumstances was impossible. I might find friends there, though in these times of war it were hard to be sure of one, and even then I would jeopardize the safety of any who would give me shelter. I was a proscribed man — a fugitive from so-called justice. Justice! The meaning of the word seemed to have been lost amid human passions. I had been a victim to an unqualified outrage and had no recourse, yet, were I captured, my life would pay the forfeit of having tried to right a wrong. I could not look for justice; I might only fly from its opposite.

And where should I go? Safety lay nowhere within reach, but before I finally slept I had made up my mind to get to New York. For there lay my heart's desire, my hope, and, aye, my fear, but it was as safe a place as I knew. In the great city I might lose myself amid the rabble of camp-followers, and later, having seen Dorothy and arrived at my

true status, I would get myself to New Haven by hook or by crook. I would be known in the old college city, for Yale was my *alma mater*, and there, I thought, I would not fail to gain assistance and occupation, two things I would need. And little I surmised of the condition of that stricken town. As to my property, it were hopeless to attempt to claim it now. I would have to wait until the end of war and success of the colonial cause, and Heaven knows the outlook was not bright for the latter, in those days.

What had I gained by leaving the *Dragon*? I asked myself, in pitiless analysis. Life, and nothing else. I had the knowledge that for the time I had no home, that my love thought me dead, or false, or both; that I was a waif on the wave of circumstance, and that in my native town I feared the hand of every man save one, and he a negro. I gritted my teeth in the bitter realization, then with an effort of will put past and future away for needed sleep.

The few hours remaining to the night went quietly enough, and ere it was fairly light I was up and out to Rance's quarters. As I went from the quiet house and into the open air I was astonished at the exhilaration of my spirits. For the moment I was free, and the sense of being no longer tied to a servile discipline made me strong in the determina-

tion that I never again would be. Perhaps, too, the condition of the weather had its effect in enlivening me. The calm was gone, the wind now blowing strongly, though there was a haze in the air like that of smoke. But it was not smoke. I recognized the conditions. We were in for that type of dry storm known as a "smoky sou'wester," but little it would trouble me, I thought. I had no dream then that the wind would come nigh to being my ruin, yet prove to be my salvation. Though strong, it was warm, and I drew it in with deep breaths.

I roused Rance from a heavy sleep and at once made him my confidant, though it irked me to realize that my estate and condition had been lowered to the point of depending on a quondam slave.

But Rance had no lack of wit. He was full of sympathy, and politics cut no figure with him. I might be rebel or loyal, but I was the son of my father, whose memory he worshiped, and, moreover, he had little love for either Carey or his sister, and swore I might command him, even begging to be taken with me where and whenever I went. I was touched by his devotion, and though I wished I might get him away from his surroundings I could not be trammelled with him. I was certain of his faith and

good sense, however, and made him an ally so far as to establish him as a guard against possible treachery on Deborah's part. He was to watch her, stationing himself where he could command a sight of both doors, and if she left the house he was to notify me at once.

I got nothing new from him concerning Dorothy save that she had gone to New York almost immediately after the spinster's arrival, but in what part of the city she resided, and in whose company, the negro had no idea.

With an air of confidence I was far from feeling I ate breakfast that morning with my two cousins, they treating me so well, albeit I was in my own house, that I grew extra cautious though I could find no flaw in their actions. It was at the table that Carey asked me my intentions, on the plea that he had only my safety in mind, stating that he understood my position as a deserter from the navy, an action he was perfectly willing to justify, under the circumstances, at the same time insisting that it would be unwise and unsafe for me to remain in the vicinity of Sag Harbor. In return for his interest I told him I should make my way westward along Nassau, getting into New York sooner or later, this bit of frankness leading to my desired end

though it came nigh to being my ruin. I averred that I was as loyal as himself, for which lie I asked Heaven to forgive me, there and then, and I maintained that New York would be safe for me. I even hinted at enlisting in the British forces, once I had found and confronted the girl for whom my heart yearned.

He then astonished me by saying that he had thought of a way whereby I might get to New York at once, knowing I was so set on Dorothy, and that there would be little danger in the journey. He told me I could never get west along the island, for the British had a detachment at Canoe Place, and Clinton's wood-choppers were out farther east than Smithtown; that I would be stopped and arrested at once, and might have hard work to account for myself and prove my loyalty. Then I asked him what he proposed I should do, and he almost took my breath away by his answer, and I felt I had been doing him a wrong in doubting him.

"Talbot," said he, "this I will do, and not to be rid of you, but because you are in danger here. I have a pass to New York, good by land or sea, that I will give to you. I will give you clothing and an open letter to a friend in the city on whom you may depend. He will help you to Jersey or to

the army, as you elect. And I will procure you safe transportation. There is a sloop captain, Quince, by name; perhaps you know him."

"John Quince, once a tenant of my father's?" I asked.

"The same. He will take you, I have no doubt. He is devoted to any of this house."

My breath came quickly at that. My real idea had been to get to Smithtown, trusting there to find a passage along the Sound instead of inland, the latter being well-nigh impossible for a person in my position. The pass he proffered would simplify matters amazingly, while to go all the way by boat would be a mighty saving to my legs and a mightier saving in the matter of time. But of Quince I was by no means sure, for in my recollection he was a man whose political opinions whirled with the wind. I knew him to be a fellow always in trouble in money matters, though a good sailor, and a man whose statements were to be taken with a grain of salt, while for his morals, well, men laughed when they spoke of them. But what were his politics and morals in such a case as mine? Both might be rotten; but a rotten plank may bear up a drowning man, and I was on a deep sea of danger.

"Where can I come by Quince?" I asked.

“I will send Deborah for him,” said Carey, turning to his sister, who had hardly spoken in my presence since I had taken the note from her.

“That you will not,” I returned, with a sudden tightening of the heart. “If any one goes it shall be Rance.”

“Your suspicion hurts me, Talbot,” he answered, without a trace of anger. “Let it be Rance, and call him yourself.”

I went for the negro, finding him on watch near the back door, and he was sent for Quince, after which came the question of clothing, though it was not a matter of an hour ere I was outfitted from my cousin’s wardrobe.

It was a nondescript costume I got into, albeit it was comfortable and fitted well enough. I made shift with all but coat and small-clothes, of which he had nothing that was not military. I scorned the coat, taking instead a cloak that had belonged to my father, but was obliged to accept the soldier short-clothes, my own breeches being too shabby and past repair.

Then Carey gave me a pass in his own name, and an open letter to one Isaac Foster, of Queen Street, New York, wherein it was stated that I was a man

loyal to His Majesty, and that my wishes should be considered.

I was to be furnished with money to the extent of fifty pounds, to be charged to my cousin, and otherwise helped as I might elect. Carey signed the paper with a flourish.

It was a fair letter, and he gave it to me unsealed that I might read it and see its temper. I confess I was taken aback at its tone. Everything was aboveboard and beyond suspicion, save the pass, the use of which would be risky. But it was all he could do, he said, and I might destroy it at any time I thought it dangerous. His logic was good and I pocketed it, not meaning to use it if I could make shift to avoid it.

I had hardly gotten into my new rig when Quince came, greeting me warmly enough in his bluff manner, and then for a time everything seemed to move on greased wheels. The sailor was a short, stocky fellow of about fifty-three and inclined to obesity, but his broad, smooth-shaven face held itself with the average in point of intelligence and good nature, though his small eye was inscrutable. After a word or two on general matters he told me the *Gloosecap* was ready and that we might get away at

once, the sooner the better, as he, too, had business in New York, and as it was then nigh to being high noon, and I was nothing loath, we prepared to set out at once.

And so I left my old home, parting from Carey with a handshake into which I put much false fervor, but when I looked around for his sister, meaning to give her a word, I found she had disappeared, and what was more, that Rance had deserted his post and was no longer there to give me a Godspeed. And it was with small regret that I put the house at my back, and little I recked what would happen there when next I should see it.

CHAPTER IV

HOODOOED

NOW, of course, nothing had been said to Quince regarding my status, and equally, of course, he thought I had but just returned from England after a long stay abroad; for when I met him I was dressed as a Christian, though not a very prosperous one. I told him that I did not care to be stopped and questioned, and he must have gathered something from my haste, for he led me down to his house by the back lane. I casually asked him if he had heard of the schooner *Dragon*, and he said he had seen her but once while she lay at Sag Harbor the fall before. That was prior to my transfer from the *Somerset*.

He pointed out in the distance the new British storehouses, with the shipping near them, but never a sign of a Redcoat did I see; and the town showed among the trees as quiet and sleepy as if the Sabbath ran seven days in the week.

We came to Quince's house presently. There was a snapping of whitecaps in the bay as the wind swept

over it, bending low the bushes and whipping the tender green of the young leaves on the shore, then whistling out to sea, where it dulled the delicate color of the water, turning it gray. And a cable's length from the little pier lay the *Gloosecap*, a thirty-six-foot vessel, a fisherman, and as fine a model of a small boat as I could wish to see. She was tugging at her mooring, her sharp nose pointing into the growing gale.

Quince left me and went into his house for a moment, while I sat out of plain sight on the short, new grass; but hardly had he disappeared when I heard quick steps behind me, and, turning, saw Rance running from the road. His black face was drawn with fright and hurry, and the sweat streamed from his shining forehead. He gave me no chance to speak first.

“Fo’ Gawd sake, Marse Talbot, dey is after you!”

“What?” I exclaimed, starting to my feet.

“It was Mis’ Debby, Marse Talbot; I see her clomb tro de da’ry winder an’ make off. She get by me, but I go behin’ her. She go to de barracks yender an’ talk to de Britisher. Den he hurry — an’ I hurry. You gone from de house, but I guess where you is, an’ here I is! Fo’ de Lawd’s sake, Marse Talbot, take me with you. She know I follow her; she

saw me. Dey will kill me when dey cotch me, dey will."

"Why did you not tell me?" I cried, catching him by the arm with a force that made him wince.

"'Cause I was too far, Marse Talbot; an' I couldn't break in among de gentry. Marse Carey would ha' knowed."

His reason was good; the fat would have been in the fire had he spoken before though it might have settled many things that remained unsettled until later. And after all, what great harm had been done? The fool of a woman had evidently taken matters into her own hands, probably from motives of revenge, and without the sanction or even the knowledge of her brother. Of the last I was sure; but the result would be fatal for me if there was any delay in my getting off. I was in a quandary for a moment, but only a moment, for as I turned to go to Quince and hurry him, first telling Rance to return to the road and watch it, I saw the old sailor coming leisurely from his house. His first words made me wild.

"I fear we will have to wait a bit," he said. "My boy has just stepped up to the village, and I can't work the sloop alone. We will have to wait for him."

"Not a cursed minute will I wait," I answered,

seized by a sudden inspiration. "You'll go now, or I'll take the darky and go without you. I have got to be in New York by to-morrow at sunrise. It is the king's business I am on."

He started at that.

"You and I might work the sloop together, going down," he said; "but I couldn't come back alone."

"Here's Rance, who is equal to any deck-hand in Sag Harbor," I returned. "Come aboard or not, as you please. I am going now."

I could neither temporize nor explain. I had no definite plan beyond to get aboard the sloop and put off, trusting to later make up a story to fit the case when I had the leisure to think of one. To impress him that I meant all I said I called Rance to follow me, and strode down to the landing, Quince coming after, though his actions seemed a bit uncertain. Without more than a word or two of protest he got into the dingey and pulled out to the anchored sloop, I looking back constantly on the way, and with the same nervous vigilance looked shoreward while the sails were being hoisted. Meanwhile I worked in a manner that might have aroused the sailor's suspicions, it being remarkable that a landsman should be so direct and effective as was I. Had he remarked the hardness of my hand when he grasped it? I

knew not, but I did know that it was far from possessing the pulpy softness that indicates the palm of a gentleman. He might see that I was hurried, but little he guessed at my pressing need and the fever of impatience besetting me.

Yet, no flash of steel or gleam of Redcoat broke the fresh green of the shore, nor was there another boat moving on the stirring waters. And this, from Miss Debby's stupidity, I afterward knew.

Instead of sending the soldiers direct to the sloop, she ordered the officer (who stopped to gather half a company, thinking the devil was loose) to the house that he might first get her brother's sense of the matter. So much for her lack of wit. Later, I thanked her for it.

With the mainsail hoisted home, the anchor clear, and the jib set, the sloop turned on her heel like a frightened horse and drove over the bay before the gale that seemed to fall to a calm as we fled. There was nothing in sight that might outfoot us, though, indeed, we might be headed; but I thanked Heaven for the freedom I had won, recking little of the future, only seeing ahead a brightness which I knew was the halo surrounding Dorothy. I was on my way to her; I would meet her soon, and prove her faith — and what could come save happiness?

With my ability to take a long breath, things aboard the sloop were snugged up; and ere we had rounded Shelter Island and left it astern, skirted the shore of Orient, and entered the rips of Plum Gut, with the broad Sound at its end, I had settled down and begun to take the future sharply into account.

But, under a flooding tide and a southwest wind, the boil of the water of the gut put an end to my thinking of myself, and we had to look out for the vessel's safety. For desiring speed, and willing to risk much for it, I would not have the sails reefed at the start; so we wallowed in the swash, shipping seas on all sides, for the rips have no direction. Once the water came in, a huge green mass, and well-nigh swamped us, soaking Quince to the neck as he clung to the wheel, and me to my waist; and I cursed the mishap, though 'twas really a blessing in disguise, for that sea undoubtedly saved my life, as I will soon show.

But we got through the gut soaked; then, bearing in mind the adage about haste being no speed, I consented to the canvas being reefed down, and so we lay to off Orient, on the Sound side, and shortened sail. After which on again, with no break in the hours save to eat the bite that Rance prepared.

The gale was increasing in force; and, though the

sky was without a cloud, the sun hardly made headway to cast a shadow, so thick was the haze in the air, and the horizon was so close that the vision could not go much over three miles. Where we now were nothing was visible but a world of gray-green tumbling waters, and the palest of domes above.

It had drawn past four o'clock, and we were plunging along on the larboard tack, beating as close to the wind as possible. Quince was still at the wheel, the negro was forward, near the bitts, in a spray, and I sitting with my back against the cabin-house, looking astern. There had been no word between Quince and me for upward of an hour, and things were going smoothly enough when my eye caught sight of something that held it, and then I saw the ghost-like outline of a sail drawing from the haze in the east.

In the limits of vision set by the thick air I made her out to be something over three miles away, nosing westward under slackened sheets and going easily under shortened canvas. We were well ahead of her and slightly up to windward, and, being small, were evidently not seen from the stranger, for she glided along without shifting her course a point. I could make out no speck of bunting on her, the distance being too great; but, to gain something of her char-

acter, and hoping she was an American privateer, I reached for the glass lying along the locker on which I was sitting, and brought it to my eye.

As I did so, Quince swung around, caught sight of the craft, and uttered a slight exclamation. I took no notice of him, nor moved, for that matter; in truth I was temporarily paralyzed. For, as I caught and held the oncoming vessel in the field of the glass, I knew her to be the schooner *Dragon*.

I knew her from the broad, yellow stripe round her; from the wide, square yard of her unset foretopsail; from her hull and general rig (she was a refitted American, captured up the Hudson); and I knew her from her tarpaulin-covered gun, carried forward of her foremast. The *Dragon* it was, past doubt; and even were it not, the vessel was an enemy, for from her gaff blew out the British ensign, as stiff as though made of painted tin.

"What do ye make her to be?" asked Quince.

"Is it a rebel privateer?"

His voice unstrung me. I lowered the glass and began whipping my wits into action.

"I know not," I answered easily; "but we are yet unseen. What would you do if it was?"

"Little, I fear, but try to cozen her."

"Have you arms aboard?"

“Do ye think me a fool to sail the Sound armed?” he asked, as he leaned forward and took the glass from my hand; then, bracing the wheel with his knee, he looked long. When he lowered the glass, his face bore a grin.

“Yer eyes are bad, Marcy,” he said. “Yonder is the very craft ye asked about this morning. And she sees us now! Look you! She is crowding up to the wind!”

That this was so I could now see with my naked eye; for, as she began clearing the haze, her details came out, as well as her change of direction.

“Show her your colors,” said I. “We have no bunting aloft; perhaps, if she knows our mettle, she will sheer off.”

“Nay,” said Quince. “There are no fools aboard her, and they make it their business to learn that of every small vessel in these waters. We may as well lay to at once, and let her come up, as to wait till they put a ball after us.”

“But we will not lay to,” I said forcibly. “I am a king’s officer on the king’s business, and am not to be interfered with by every whipper-snapper flying the red flag!”

He made no reply, though he looked at me quizzically. I had risen to my feet by then, and my

determination was as fixed as the mast in its step. If the *Dragon* overhauled us, and I were caught, I would swing in the wind from her barren yard-arm in something less than an hour. But the last could not possibly happen, as before I would be taken I would let the Sound have my body and life; hanged I would never be.

But as yet I was unsuspected, and the *Dragon* was a long way off; and I am not a man whose liver is the color of chalk — by which I mean I do not succumb to fear alone — and ere I would wait for my fate, or allow Quince to follow his bent, I would take the sloop from him by force and pile her broken bones upon the nearest shore, trusting to escape alive from the wreck.

Quince again turned his head to look at the oncoming schooner, perhaps to measure her distance, and as he did so I saw a ball of smoke break from her bow and drift to leeward; but there was no sound to the shot, and no ball skipped toward us.

“There, ye see! They call us!” said Quince. “There was naught but powder that time, but the next puff may back a ball!”

“Let her shoot, and be cursed!” I exclaimed. “Not in a thousand shots could she hit us at that

distance, even if the iron carried so far. It will be a stern-chase, and a stern-chase makes the leader a winner. 'Twill take her nigh three hours to overhaul us, and before then it will be dusk. We can dodge them."

The fervor and temper of his answer to this was unexpected. He leaned forward, his tobacco-stained teeth showing ugly as he spoke.

"I tell ye, Talbot Marcy, king's man or not, I have no knowledge of what ye be, but I will not risk neck and reputation for ye. Mark that! Ye look like a hawk as ye stand there, but I'm not afraid of ye. I'm a king's man, too, if ye but knew it; and if ye care to make trouble, then the worst for you. This helm goes down, d'ye understand?"

But he did not then offer to throw the wheel over, and I determined to waste no more words with him. I turned my head and called:

"Rance!"

The negro came scrambling aft; and when he had got to the cockpit, I spoke again:

"John Quince, I've heard your say — now hear mine. On the deck of yonder schooner I can never stand and live long thereafter — no matter why. But I would not get you into trouble by running;

therefore, give up the helm to the negro. He'll obey me, if you will not. This sloop sails on while her planks hold together."

I stood squarely in front of him, my legs apart to balance me on the heaving deck. To back my words I had no other arms than nature had given me, and if Quince spoke the truth there were no weapons on board to which he could have recourse. Aside from that I had no fear of him if it came to active trouble. Though heavier than I he was assuredly a foot under me in stature, and not sprightly, and I might handle him with ease — and could have done so save for the one thing I had not taken into account; and that, that he was a liar. For my speech was hardly out of my mouth when, without an instant of warning, he put his hand under his coat and, pulling forth a pistol, pointed it at my chest. His face was now blazing.

"Get ye into the cabin, ye turncoat, ye deserter, ye damned rebel!" he shouted, and, dropping the wheel, he jumped to his feet and stepped toward me. With the helm released the vessel flew into the wind and lost her way, heaving wildly on the angry water. I saw enough for the moment, and had but an instant to choose the manner of my death, but guided by

pure instinct, I sprang toward the man with fury in my heart.

Hardly had I moved when he divined my intention to close with him, and pulled the trigger. But there was no explosion; instead, there came only a sharp click as the flint encountered the steel; and then I knew that the sea which had come aboard in the gut had soaked the priming and made the weapon useless as a firearm. I thanked Heaven for the water I had lately cursed.

With an oath, Quince hurled the pistol at my head, but it missed me and lodged in the bunt of the mainsail, where I afterward found it. Expecting no mercy at my hands, now that he had unmasked himself, he jumped from the cockpit, drawing a knife as he went, and running along the starboard side of the cabin-house, made forward.

I tripped over the coaming as I turned to follow him, and when I gathered my feet under me again he was by the mast, slashing at the halyards with the knife.

I fathomed his intentions. He would cripple the sloop; and now, with fire in my brain and murder in my heart, I made after him.

As I did so, I saw the peak halyard part; the gaff

fell with a thud against the mast, and there hung, thrashing in the roll of the vessel and the beating of the loosened sail. But I was too near the man for him to do more damage. As he saw me coming, he gave a swipe at the throat halyard, which, had he severed, would have ended all, but he missed it, and then tore astern on the larboard side, with me hot after him.

I reached him as he leaped into the cockpit, where, driven at bay, he turned on me, knife in hand. With a heaven-sent quickness of vision, I saw plainer than anything else that the knife was but a half blade, and bore no point; therefore, I heeded not the steel, and came close. He made a vicious slash at me, and then I struck him full in the mouth.

Whether or not the blow stunned him I cannot say, but he pitched backward through the open companionway and landed on his head, three feet below the outer deck. When I followed, and bent over him, blood was gushing from his ears and mouth, and I thought him dead.

I was troubled by no regrets at that time; my temper was too hot, the danger too real and great. I hung over him only long enough to know that he was past doing me harm, and then I leaped up the companion steps.

Rance stood on the cabin-house. The gaff was banging to and fro, the end of the severed line streaming to leeward. The wheel was jerking violently under the kick of the rudder; and the freed sail thundered out its protests in the gale as the great boom slatted.

And over and above all else was the *Dragon*. She had seemed to have come wonderfully near.

CHAPTER V

THE CHASE

THE conditions surrounding me were such as demanded rapid thought, unless I were willing to succumb to them, and in a moment I saw that, notwithstanding the discouraging outlook, I was not yet absolutely lost. For if I could repair the peak halyard, hoist the gaff and get the sloop under way, it might yet be possible to carry out my previous intention of escape by running the vessel ashore.

My knowledge, gained through hard experience, made me sure that the enemy, reefed as she was, and sailing close to the wind, could not be making better than five knots an hour, and even were we at anchor it would take her more than half an hour to come up. If, on the other hand, I could sail off on a free wind, and reduce her gain to feet instead of fathoms, it would more than treble the time. Much might happen — much might be accomplished in two hours. At all events, I was not the man to give up until utterly incapacitated, and that which was yet possible I dared attempt.

In a few words I explained the situation to Rance, and even while explaining I had him climb up by the sail-hoops, until, when near the masthead, he could grasp the peak halyard as it whipped out in the wind. The little vessel was ramping on the now heavy seas like a wild animal, and to stand on her deck without holding fast was impossible.

But the negro, a born sailor, as is nearly every male native of eastern Long Island, clung like a monkey to the swaying mast and reached the line, which he fastened to its severed part with a hitch, and then came riding down the repaired halyard, the weight of his body bringing the slamming gaff half into its place.

Then I did a daring thing — a most unsailorly thing in such a wind. As Rance struck the deck I ran below, jumped over the rolling figure of Quince and, seizing the knife he had used, and which lay on the cabin floor, I came back and passed the blunt blade through each reefing point, thereby throwing to the blast the full canvas of both mainsail and jib.

With the help of the strong arm of the negro, for whose presence I now thanked God, the great sail was hoisted home, and in another moment I was at the helm and we were again tearing through the seas, now being on the larboard tack. Perhaps we

had lost a quarter of an hour — more, it seemed to me, for by then the menacing form of the *Dragon* had so grown that many of her details were plainly visible without the aid of a glass.

Under the conditions, adverse as they were, the mettle of the stanch *Gloosecap* showed itself. As if outraged at the inhuman treatment of spreading a full sail on her, the little sloop laid down at a dangerous angle and snarled through the water at a rate that sent the brine spinning aft into the cockpit in sheets. I minded little, if nothing parted aloft, and I could keep the vessel off the wind, but the strain on the wheel became so great that finally I had to call Rance to help me hold her.

The conditions had now fallen to a mere struggle for life. And where was I to go? Only to wreck the vessel had been decided upon, but upon which shore? I knew no more than that I was on the bosom of Long Island Sound, for owing to the thickness of the haze no sight of land could be had north or south. I had no definite idea of how far west we had gone, nor which was the nearest coast, Long Island or Connecticut.

It came to me, however, that if I made south to Long Island, I would have to go about on the starboard tack (which would mean a loss of time), and

even if I succeeded in landing alive, I would yet be in a hostile country, and fairly sure of arrest as a suspicious stranger. I could not return to Sag Harbor on account of the British at Canoe Place.

There was nothing for it but to determine on Connecticut. It might be near or far, but that land bore no menace to me, once I could put foot on it, and with quick decision I eased up the helm and slacked the sheets until the gallant sloop pointed her nose to the north, and with the wind now on her larboard quarter (her best point of sailing), we fairly flew through the brine.

Up to that moment I believe the *Dragon* thought we were maneuvering to meet her, for she had come steadily on, but when she marked the whole sail that was swung on the sloop, and noted our change of direction, she must have come at the fact that we wanted to run from her, and so her suspicions were aroused, for she at once careened to the gale and altered her course, now being slightly abaft our beam, but well down the wind.

For a time nothing happened, but she finally showed her temper in the gun she fired, though the gale bore off the sound, and a little later she luffed up and shook out a reef in her mainsail, then came after us at an increased speed. It soon became ap-

parent that she was gaining, and a magnificent, though menacing, sight she presented. Like a gull she swept toward us, shearing through seas that heaved the sloop high, but were as nothing to her. At last I could see the tumble and curl of white water under her bows, and so closely had she drawn that the square of her red flag, standing almost rigid in the gale, was plain to my unassisted eye.

It was then that they began to fire solid shot, though nearly a mile away, and it was then that my hope had sunk to its lowest ebb. The first ball went wide; so did the second and third, but the fourth drove into the water not more than two fathoms astern, and sent up a mighty splash. They were fast mending their aim; a little more to the right and the iron would have passed through our hull.

For the first hour of our flight, which now bid fair to be useless, I do not think that a word passed between me and Rance. The negro, by this with a grip on his nerves, stood like a swaying statue with his eyes fixed on the straining gear aloft; I do not believe he even looked back at the oncoming menace; it may have been that he feared what he might see. And surely in the event of our capture his case would be but little less hard than mine. Not that he would be hanged or shot, but with the scant humanity

shown to those of his color, at that day, and since, there could be nothing but prolonged and acute suffering for him.

And he had risked all for me. His woolly head was soaking with brine, and he blinked in the sheets of water that flew over us, but he kept accurate watch of every yaw of the sloop, meeting it with the helm on which were clasped his powerful hands.

About us were water and sky, and for the matter of that, in my poor brain the world seemed to be made up of those two alone, and wind. I seemed to be existing only, not living, and that, too, in an ash-colored inferno through which was creeping toward me a spark of fire in the shape of one of His Majesty's piratical patrol schooners. I hated her. I hated every man aboard of her, not dreaming that the means of my final salvation was at that moment on her deck watching a midget sloop reeling through a liquid hell. A few more minutes would end it. We would be ridden down or a shot would go through us, but just as I had nerved myself for the finale, and even decided the trivial matter of from which side I would finally cast myself into the sea, Rance lifted up his voice in a shout:

“Hi! Marse Talbot! Dere's lan' dead ahead!”

I was then so besotted in depression and hopeless-

ness that his cry did not even fillip my spirits, and at first I could see no sign of land; but when I made out the faint blue blotch that marked it there came a reaction to my unnatural lowness of mood. The coast did not loom high, but racing as we were it opened up through the haze with wonderful rapidity, and as I marked its nearness a new hope was born in me — a hope that strengthened with the minutes. For not only did I now recognize where we were, a matter about which I had been in the dark, but I felt that could we but escape being struck by a ball the chance were fair that the sloop would be saved. That chance, once recognized, brought me to life.

And why? Because before me lay the Thimbles. Every school-boy familiar with the map of New England knows of that charming group of islands off the Connecticut coast. I knew them as I knew my father's dooryard, for I had cruised among them many a time. The sight of them told me we were not far from New Haven, and if once I could penetrate the little archipelago we might be free from pursuit, as most of the channels would not permit a vessel of the schooner's draft to follow, and the black teeth of submerged reefs made skillful pilotage a necessity. Moreover, in another hour it would be

too dark to aim a cannon, or even to venture the *Dragon* close to a coast so dangerous.

I think that those aboard the British schooner realized this, for they fired with greater frequency, and it was only the smallness and swiftness of the sloop that saved her from being struck in the hull.

Heaven alone knows how my breath seemed to stick in my chest and my heart choke me for the next few minutes, and just as escape seemed sure I thought the end had come. For we were hit finally. Not as to hull or spars, but a lift of surge threw up the *Dragon's* bow as she fired, and the shot, being well in line, passed through our mainsail, near its head, and at once the hole tore wide in the gale, thereby lessening our speed.

But the time had come when the matter of mere speed had fallen to a second consideration. For, besides the round shot from the schooner, there had risen a new danger.

We had now drawn so near the Thimbles that I could plainly see the only open passage available. I say open, meaning only the space between the two islands that were nearest me. As for its being accessible for the sloop, that were a mere guess; for in what might have been a channel for small boats in light weather, there was now a veritable hell of

white water, showing the existence of a bar or reef. I had never made that passage, and of the state of the tide I had no idea. And yet it was clear that the trial of that milky turmoil must be made, though the result lay in pure chance.

We were still some miles from the main coast of Connecticut, and should I balk at the danger of the bar, and run the sloop ashore on the nearest island, it would mean that I had but cooped myself upon a few acres of land, from which the enemy could take me at his leisure.

Nay, I would not do that. I would charge at the hazard, and without changing a point in our course I held the sloop's nose against the white barrier, and those aboard the *Dragon* must have thought me mad. I had cast the die, and would abide by the result. It might be wreck and death, but the *Dragon* would miss her prey.

But then the sun was close to the horizon, its form lost in the murk, and the *Dragon* had drawn within fair rifle-shot. So near was she that her masts appeared to tower above us, and I could plainly see the faces that lined her bows. Sheets of spray flew over them, and the schooner's forecloths were wet half-way to their heads.

Now they began to play on us with small arms.

How many shots they fired and missed I know not, but presently a bullet slapped into the woodwork of the cabin, and then came another and another. They were trying to pick us off, as we strained at the wheel, and there was nothing I could do but pray they would miss their mark, and thank Heaven when they did.

Presently, as we struck the outer billows of the bar, the very deuce seemed to get into the *Gloosecap*; and in saving the vessel from the danger of the deep I forgot, for the moment, the danger from gunpowder, though even then I knew I had won, so far as the schooner was concerned. For as I turned my head to take a last look at her I marked that she suddenly had her pilotage in mind and was luffing into the wind, evidently having no intention of risking her bones for the sake of capturing an impudent sloop in which there might be little glory and less loot. The mist from the torn waters veiled her in a light fog, but there was no doubting her abandonment of the chase.

To those on board her we must have appeared like a cockle-shell going to its sure destruction, and to me it looked to be no less. For I became fairly dizzy from the jerking leaps the vessel made, the sudden dropping to unknown depths, the staggering

recovery, and the crash or hissing roar of the white water. It was a strenuous ten minutes, and only once since then did the sea make my heart beat so uncertainly, my breath come so hard. The air was thick. I could no longer see ahead, nor on either hand, but guided the sloop only by the pressure of the helm, and to it we hung, Rance and I.

But surely Heaven held us that day, for the keel of the *Gloosecap* struck neither rock nor sand, probably being lifted clear of the shallowest part on the breast of some giant roller. It was little short of a miracle, for I have since sounded that channel, and found it a scant fathom at high water, and the *Gloosecap* drew five feet.

But we slid out of the inferno and into water that was comparatively quiet, the wind still bowling us along, and by the time I reached the center of the labyrinth it had grown so dark I dared not go farther in those narrow waters, and so I rounded to, dropped anchor and let my pent breath go in a blast, my heart at last taking on its proper action.

CHAPTER VI

UNHOODED

EVEN as I write of these matters now lying long in the past there comes to me the memory of the terrible exhaustion I experienced when, with nerves and muscles relaxed after their strain, I saw the sails lowered. But the negro, whose faith in me had been his support, appeared in the acme of good spirits, going about his work with a dash and vigor I could not but envy in my state of laxity.

Up to then I had no other idea than of taking the small boat, and with Rance, escaping to the mainland; but two thoughts on the matter convinced me that I would be a fool to consider such a move. True it was that my plans had gone awry, and that I must make my way to New York from the north instead of from the east, and by land instead of by water; but here was the *Gloosecap* as sound as ever and within a few miles of the patriot town of New Haven. How much credit might I gather if I took her in, a capture, and delivered her to the authorities? What might come of it?

This I determined to do; and with the determination came dreams of prize-money — little enough for such a craft, no doubt — and there would come a season of rest, and safety from the curse of being hunted. But I minded me of the old adage anent counting chickens before the eggs are hatched, and was brought up with a round turn by a thought of the body of Quince in the cabin. I could make no sail before dawn and must keep a vigilant watch through the night, but I had no notion of carrying a dead man aboard for longer than it would take me to get rid of him; and so, putting aside my fatigue, I descended into the cabin to fetch him out, well knowing the aversion the negro would have toward a job of this kind.

I had no intention of doing more or less than casting the body of Quince over the rail, but when I groped for him, the cabin being pitch black, I could not find him. My nerves must have been sufficiently frayed by then; for, as I went over every inch of floor space on which I had seen him helplessly rolling, my wet hair lifted on my head — for he was not there.

I returned to the deck then, setting my teeth and cursing myself for a coward; and without speaking to Rance, who was on the lookout forward, I blocked

the cabin windows from the outside that no radiance might go abroad, and then, going down again, deliberately struck a light and kindled the little lamp bracketed to the bulkhead.

Whereupon I laughed hysterically.

For Quince was not dead. He had partly recovered from the effects of my blow and the fall, and had gathered wit and strength enough to crawl into a bunk, though how he had managed to stay in it during our passage of the bar was a mystery to me.

He was a sight, with the dried blood on his face and both eyes black; and when he saw me going toward him, he put up his great hands in a gesture of supplication, as if he thought I was about to finish the job of making an end to him.

But murder was far from my thoughts at that time; thankfulness was in its place; for I had then never killed a man in hot or cold blood. Having no fear of him I sat down and looked at him without speaking, but finally curiosity got the better of me. "Quince," said I, "you called me a rebel. Why?" He made no answer, at which I knew he had turned sulky, for as he could get into the bunk and hold himself there he was not without power. "Not only a rebel, but turncoat and deserter," I went on. "Supposing it is true, how came you by the knowl-

edge?" His only answer was a blank stare without an attempt at a return.

"Very good," said I, rising; "seeing your mood and the measure of life left in you, I'll put you beyond the power of harming me in the future. Have you powder and ball about you?" For having recovered the pistol I had a wish to recharge it for my own protection. I think he feared that I was about to kill him then, for his mouth opened wide in the "No," he let out.

"Under oath I wouldn't believe you," I said; "I'll have a search to convince myself. They may come to light."

I did search him, he making no protest by word or act, and, indeed, he would have been helpless under my hand, which is none of the lightest when I am aroused; but neither powder nor ball did I discover, though that which I did find mattered more than aught else. In a belt about his heavy waist I came across a number of papers and some twenty pounds in good British gold, and then I tied him hand and foot with a hank of signal halyard and left him to his thoughts, first blowing out the light.

I felt better then. It may be considered that I was but a weak fool to find relief in the knowledge that I had not killed the man for his treachery, but

so it was. I was not hardened at that time, despite the injustice and cruelty I had witnessed aboard the *Somerset* and the *Dragon*, and I take that man to be a brute who rejoices in the death of one of his fellows, even though he be an enemy. To render the latter harmless is a different matter from taking life, though that may at times be justified.

After getting a bite in the galley, which freshened me, body and mind, Rance and I sat down to watch, and wear out the night, having the tender ready on the quarter that we might escape in her if danger threatened. And the only danger of which I could then conceive was that the *Dragon* might send a small boat to explore the labyrinth, penetrating it from the west, and come upon us, but it was a danger that did not materialize. The night was pitch black, the wind going down toward dawn, but there was not a sound that gave me uneasiness though I remained as alert as though the devil himself was close at my heels.

Time passed, the negro being forward and I aft, and the dawn struggled with the darkness. When the night was well spent I was completely fagged from all I had been through, to which was added loss of sleep, but I was soon to find that which woke me thoroughly. When it grew to be fair dawn —

and by then the wind had died to a breath — I sent Rance to the outer island in the boat to see if the *Dragon* was hovering about; and in the interim of waiting I fell to examining the belt I had taken from Quince, who still lay as I had left him.

Among the papers were some of minor interest, but I soon hit upon a bulky document directed to General Howe, in New York, and found it was but a report of the quantity of supplies at Sag Harbor; and a goodly lot there was, together with the roll of the officers and men there stationed — about one hundred — and a detailed description of the post.

And then I found two things, each of which bore on my future. One was a pass, or a sort of commission, running thus:

“The bearer, John Quince, being a man loyal and true to His Majesty, is hereby appointed a King’s Messenger between the ports of New York and Sag Harbor, and is at liberty to sail the waters of Long Island Sound by night or by day without interference by H. M. forces, either on land or on the sea, until this protection is revoked in general orders.”

This was dated at New York two months before, and was signed by General Howe. Here was something, and it opened my eyes to the office of the fel-

low tied below; but it was as nothing to the next paper I came upon.

This latter was enclosed, sealed, and directed to one Sir John Dirck, but there was no address beyond that of "H. M. Forces in New York," and the words "To be delivered by John Quince" were in one corner, and having small respect for the correspondence of such a fellow I incontinently ripped the cover from the captured letter, and read it. It was well that I did. I read that communication three times before I came to a full and realizing sense of what it surely meant, though it was simple enough.

I was wide awake now. Every nerve in my body seemed to be singing from suppressed excitement, and I saw the finger of fate in all that had happened the day before. Had the *Dragon* not chased the sloop, or had there been no altercation betwixt Quince and myself, I had been a ruined man. I need no more than transcribe the letter to show the truth of this. It ran thus:

My Dear Major:

If, instead of sending me, as you did, a few weeks ago, assurances that my cousin, Talbot Marcy, was dead and out of the way, you had done as did the King of France to Prince John, and wrote, "The

Devil is loose; take heed for yourself," it would have been more to the point.

For as I pen this he is here in the house with me, a hawk in appearance and nature, and I am in no position to deal with him single-handed. Let me tell you to look to yourself, else you will lose Dorothy Hilton, for if she sees him, she will send you packing, unless I underestimate her nature, and knowing his temper, which, God wot, I do, you may be in danger of losing more, should he meet you personally, for I believe he has an indistinct recollection of your connection with his misfortune. Should he fathom it all you are like to be a doomed man.

But I am about to deliver him into your hands, and with this you will find the way to rid yourself of an incubus, the king of an enemy, and me of a fear that his father's estates will slip from the slight grasp I have on them. In the latter event you will forever be wanting the thousand pounds I owe you.

It is thus: I have gulled him into a sense of friendship and am about to ship him with Quince to New York. I cannot notify the authorities here, for the reason that he keeps a close watch on me, and the fact that it would not do for me to move against my relative too openly. I am secretly writing this while I am supposed to be asleep, and to tell the truth, I am afraid of the man.

You can locate him at Isaac Foster's on Queen Street, and must lay hands on him at once. The motive will be no pretext.

He is a deserter from H. M. Schooner Dragon. He is a cursed rebel at heart, and you will find him in possession of a pass in my name, together with enough of an English uniform to damn him as a spy. I need only hint at the rest.

Deliver him to the provost marshal, and you and I may sleep easy; there is no resurrection from Cunningham's treatment.

Destroy this at once, lest it destroy us both; only, send me word when the hawk's neck is wrung.

C. D.

Here was "matter for a May morning," and so stunning in its nature that I could scarcely believe my own eyes. But there was no doubt as to its authorship, even had not the initials been those of my cousin, as, in order to make sure of the matter I pulled out Carey Drummond's letter recommending me to Isaac Foster, and compared the writing of the two. They were identical in chirography.

I cannot say that after a few moments' thought I remained astonished at the perfidy of my cousin, but had not dreamed that his hate for me would go as far as to urge him to compass my death. Of course, the "wringing of the hawk's neck" meant my being hanged, or had the hawk remained hooded, it might have meant so.

But, thank Heaven, I was unhooded at last! If

I could but rise and swoop on him! Afraid of me! I was ready to swear by every saint in the old calendar that he should have reason. The blood fairly surged through me at my present inability to punish him, and its rush was not lessened as I considered my narrow escape.

In strict justice I could not blame Quince. As compared to Drummond he had acted an honorable part, though I have yet to learn how he had come by his knowledge of me. I have an idea that a letter detailing my status had been slipped into his hand along with the damnable thing I had read, and that his going into his house was but an excuse to obtain a chance to peruse it. Like a rattlesnake, he had become an open enemy, his lack of ability losing him his second stroke, and by the rules of war he was doomed to suffer for his defeat. For he was now out of the race, as in less than twelve hours he would be a prisoner of war in New Haven — if the *Dragon* had sailed on — for now I determined to go there at once and deliver prisoner, sloop, and papers into the hands of the authorities.

All but Drummond's letter. I would keep that, and it would go hard for me if I did not at some day jam the proof of his perfidy down his throat.

CHAPTER VII

THE PLAN

SO engrossed was I in the matter of my cousin's treacherous letter and the narrow margin of my escape that I lapsed in my watch, and was fairly surprised to find Rance had come alongside in the boat without my having heard or seen him.

But he brought good news, as he reported the Sound clear of sail, mast, and hull as far as the glass could carry in any direction. It was evident that the *Dragon*, guessing nothing of the sloop's importance, and thinking it had gone to its own destruction, had sailed on to complete its circling of Long Island, that being her regular beat.

I lost no time in moving after Rance's return; and when I had eased Quince's bonds and gave him food, finding him in nowise aggressive, as he suffered from a throbbing head, I had the shot-pierced sail roughly mended, and then set out for New Haven under a light north wind.

Had I not been torn by my discovery of the morning, I might have looked upon this part of the trip

as a mere pleasure excursion; for was I not bringing into a friendly port a captured sloop together with a king's messenger and a report which might or might not be of value?

But to me there was less pleasure than pride in these things. My mind, when I could cease chewing the cud of my rancor, ran upon what the future held for me. What was I to do next? How was I to get word to Dorothy Hilton? Aye, where was Dorothy? Every question seemed to turn on the girl; she was behind every thought.

It is not to be supposed that a strange sloop could sail into any American port unmolested. I was quickly compassed by a number of small craft as I went up the harbor; but as I offered no resistance to being boarded, and told half my story to each official in turn, I came in haloed by a sort of dim glory, and made it my business to be directed to the commander of the American forces in that vicinity.

This man proved to be Major Tallmadge, then quartered at the Benedict Arnold house. At that time the great American traitor stood high in the patriot cause, his fall coming later, but his vacated house had become the military center of the district; and so, after I had made myself as presentable as my limited wardrobe would allow, I left Rance to answer

further questions by either truth or lying, as he would, and betook myself ashore in the company of an officer (who, I fancy, still had suspicions of me), and I saw the last of Quince as he was being carted toward the town jail with a rabble around him, a crest-fallen man and with the broad mark of his capture still on his face. Not a word would he say to me nor to those who questioned him, only glowering through his blackened eyes, a sullen, reticent, angry beast, and one in whom I guessed a spirit of impotent vengeance dominated all else. He had been so sure of me that his own fall had not been considered possible, and as I saw him led away I thought of him as done for; but I failed to consider his cunning and ability.

Now, I had never seen Major Tallmadge, though I knew him to be a Long Island man; but when at last I was alone with him, and told him who I was, he almost took me in his arms, and might have done so had I been smaller; for he had known my father for years, only he had not heard of his death. With that, and the fact that my name was on the rolls of Yale, I needed no further backing, and beginning at the time of my being pressed, I gave him my whole story down to that night, not even omitting my relations with Dorothy, holding that frankness would gain more than half measures. He listened with one

great, ragged fist clinched on the table, his gray brows knitted, and his broad, thin-lipped mouth firmly closed. I can see him now as he sat there. When I was through, he leaned back in his chair like one relieved of a weight from his mind.

"And now for these same papers!" said he.

I gave them to him, holding back nothing, and he read in silence, the glow from the whale-oil lamp shining over his hard, strong face. When he had done, he laid down the papers and fell into a study I dared not break. Presently he roused himself.

"Young man," said he, "you have unwittingly accomplished a great thing and mayhap made a way clear for yourself. What do you wish to do?"

"Whatever your honor advises," I returned, which was the wisest thing I could have said.

"Look!" said he. "This matter of the stores at Sag Harbor is important. I never dreamed of their quantity, though I knew the enemy had made a quarry there, and now if it doesn't go up in smoke within the space of a fortnight, it will be because we lack brave men — which we do not. Let that rest. I tell you, Mr. Marcy, I can use you better than in sending you back to smoke out a few platoons of British. If you will be guided by me, you can both put yourself

on your feet and serve your country at the same time. Have you taken the oath? ”

“ I have never had the chance, sir ; but I am ready.”

“ Spoken like your father, and the oath you shall have. Now, listen, and mark how Providence has played the enemy into our hands. You were bound to New York ; good ! I wish you to go thither, there being nothing to stand in the way but cowardice. Mark how the lay of the land fits the enterprise ! Here in the harbor you have a sloop unhurt, and one probably known in the small waters about New York. You have a negro who is devoted to you, as I wish all men were to me, and you carry a king’s pass ! Do not these things point the way ? Moreover, as a pretext for your going you have a message, or report, for Howe — and much good it will do him once I have a copy of it ! Could things join better ? They could not ! If you are stopped on the way, as you may be, you can tell a story of Quince being sick ; wit will carry you through, and of wit and spirit you have enough, as you have shown.”

“ And when I arrive ? ” I asked, though I fancied I knew what was to come.

“ I would have you get information,” he said firmly.

“You mean you would have me act as a spy?”

“Construe my meaning to fit any word you like,” said he; “but I would have you act like a man with the blood of your father in his veins — a man who should be willing to do, to suffer, to risk his life for a principle. If you are not such I cannot use you here, nor elsewhere; nor have I time to give you to make up your mind.”

I cannot convey the dignity of his manner, nor the more than logic and appeal that his words carried with them. To him I was either a patriot or a poltroon, and it did not take me an instant to decide upon which impression should remain with him. “I will accept the conditions,” I replied promptly. “Moreover, I have business in New York.”

“Good!” he exclaimed, biting off the word as his face expanded in a hard smile. “And now comes the important matter. I give you no commission for general spying; that is not for you; but I have specific instructions for you. Once in the city you can do your own business, but after that I wish you to look for one Maude Baxter. She is a spy, and she shies neither at the name nor the station. She moves in high, royal society, and none suspect her; but the information she has gathered, I believe, she is unable to transmit for want of a bearer, for we have

had nothing from her for two months. Do you follow me? ”

“ I follow you. Do you know her, sir? ”

“ I know nothing about her, save that Maude Baxter is not her real name. It is for you to find her. Make your own love to your own lady in your own way; but find Maude Baxter, and bring back the matter she trusts you with, and I will go bail, Mr. Talbot Marcy, that you have a commission in the Continental army, if I have to throw up mine to get it. 'Tis a glorious venture, suited to your years and blood; then, as soon as may be, go and hang your dastardly cousin, and if you want help, call on me.”

He got to his feet abruptly and fell to pacing the room.

“ But I might run into the *Dragon* on the way, major,” I said, though my heart bounded at the picture he had drawn.

“ You might. I have naught to do with that. And you might be captured and rot in the prison-ship *Jersey*, or hang on Kalchook Hill. Had I not thought you one of wit, resource, and bravery, I would not have spoken. Is your Dorothy Hilton for a man of mettle, or do you expect her to fly at your whistle, with no risk to yourself? If —”

"I will go," I said, interrupting him. He turned on me like a shot, and held out his hand.

"You are your father's son!" he exclaimed. "Now get hence, and come back at nine in the morning. You will then take the oath, and I will give you the key by which Maude may know you. Heaven bless you for a man!"

And so I went from him, with matter enough to think about for that night, though the more I thought the more I was in for the adventure.

The next morning I was at headquarters on time, and there took the oath of allegiance to the United Colonies; afterward, Tallmadge drew me into his room again, where we were alone. He gave me the report to Howe and handed back the protection for the sloop and the letter to Isaac Foster, but Drummond's letter he held.

"This I will keep till you return," he said. "'Twould be a sentence to death were it found on you."

"Nevertheless, I will take it," I said. "For if things go aright I shall have occasion to use it before I see you again. It will procure me an introduction to Sir John Dirck, whom I have need to know."

"Faith, your head is longer than mine!" he re-

turned. "But I would advise you to put your beard to the razor. It marks you, and the lack of it would cause you to look less like the hawk they call you. Now, listen, my son. You are not to look for Maude Baxter among the commonalty, for it would be lost time; but it is this way that she may come by you as a trusty messenger. To any high dame you may suspect you may boldly ask if she knows one Maude Baxter.

"It is simple, is it not? But mind you this. She may say yes or no, for women are queer; and you may only be sure of her when she answers at once and in these words: '*I know her passing well. What do you wish of her?*' And you are to say: '*Bring me to her that I may tell her.*'

"You will see what comes of it, leaving it to her to get her information to you. This is the instruction given to me. It is all I know, for whether the woman be young or old, fair or otherwise, the deuce take me, young man, if I can tell. Do you want a man to go with you?"

"No, sir. I have the negro."

"And when will you start?"

"To-night," I answered promptly. "The date on the report will show some delay already."

"My faith, sir," he replied warmly, "you fly

straight! I had not thought of that. Have you money?"

"I have a trifle of my own, and the twenty pounds I robbed Quince of."

"And I have none to give you, my son. But Quince will have little use for gold for some time. Make your way with it, and may Heaven go with you!"

Thus I left him to go on an errand which I was perfectly aware would make or mar me for life.

CHAPTER VIII

A CLOSE CALL

BUT all seemed simple and even safe enough; this sailing to New York under a protection, though in the name of another man.

I could not go as Quince, for many should, and I found did, know him; but I might pass as his deputy, weaving some yarn to account for his absence, and the papers to Howe would be a fair warrant for my errand. My trouble did not appear to lie in getting in or out of the city, but in accomplishing anything while there. Before me dangled two baits — one of love, the other a commission in the army. Could I win both, I were a made man; but I knew the difficulties of the later.

But hope gilds early life, and it was with a spirit of vigor and determination that I retraced my steps toward the sloop, and under escort at that, for the British breeches I wore excited more than mere curiosity in all who saw me. Not but what I might now easily have come by others, but those I wore were to be my badge of loyalty — as they appeared to

be at the moment, for had I not been guarded I would likely have been mobbed by the unthinking crowd to whom the red of the king looked much as it does to an angry bull.

I did not sail that night, which perhaps was a good thing. For the air fell flat, and the harbor waved like heaving molten glass. The calm held all that night and the next day, so that it was really more than two days after my entry into New Haven that I got out of it.

In the meantime I had shed my beard, and laughed as I looked at the fair skin it left, for the chin of a maiden could not have been whiter. To remedy that, I lay on my back on deck with my face exposed to the sun, and by the time I left the harbor my smooth cheeks and chin were parboiled and my face looked like a boiled lobster, for the which I later had reason to be thankful.

New Haven is some seventy miles from New York, as the crow flies, and as I could not hope to average better than five knots an hour, it would take me something more than half a day to get there. Therefore I started late at night, that I might sail the broader water in darkness and have daylight when in the narrows of Hell Gate.

So, with a small measure of powder and ball for

Quince's pistol — his name being carved on the wood of the stock — something in the way of provisions, and with new reefing-points to the sails, Rance and I started off in a cool north wind, I full of hope and he with enough belief in me to go wherever I went and give thanks for the privilege.

The first thing I did was to school the negro, and such was my belief in him that I held back nothing. I had not consulted him regarding his willingness to go on with me, nor did it seem to occur to him that he might leave me. Surely no man ever had a more faithful retainer, and one bright withal, as this history will show. I drilled the negro in a story which was to account for the absence of Quince, myself to appear as his authorized deputy, he being sick. And my name was to be — I halted there for want of a name, and then came an inspiration, for it was nothing less.

“By the Lord, Rance, my name shall be Baxter — Bob Baxter. Forget it not. Surely it is a fair errand that I should seek out my sister Maude. I will be Quince's nephew, for the nonce, and you are simply Rance, belonging to Carey Drummond, and we are of Sag Harbor. The less we lie, the less to remember.”

And so we conned the lesson.

Now, I am not going to speak of this little voyage, because nothing happened during the first of it, save that at dawn the following day the wind dropped again and we lay near the Connecticut shore and broiled for the matter of six hours. It is enough to tell that there we were unmolested, but instead of getting into the long arm of New York Harbor by daylight, it was just going dusk when I struck it, when I thought myself lost before my errand had really begun. For as I rounded the point near Throg's Neck, and drew in sight of the little place called Whitestone, there, in the weakening light, I saw a schooner anchored on the bight of the stream, and my heart leaped to my throat as I recognized the yellow band that marked the hull of the *Dragon*.

There was no mistaking her as she lay with her sharp nose pointed against the wash of the tide, which was making. And there was no turning aside from her for the stream is there narrow and we were being carried along more by the rush of the flood than by any strength of air. A motion to stay or change our course would have been fatal, but the schooner lay well toward the Long Island side and I was close to the mainland. Perhaps she would let us pass, the very audacity of the sloop being there

tending to lull suspicion, and I had the English flag at our peak.

But fry of the size of the *Gloosecap* was legitimate prey for the schooner, as I well knew, and the first faint hope I had of being ignored was soon dashed, for they had seen us, of course, and as we came opposite the *Dragon*, in the fast waning light, I marked a boat drop from her davits, and in a few minutes I could see the officer in its stern sheets as the little craft came hard for us, a curl of foam under its cutwater.

What I thought of then is past the telling, so jumbled was my brain. I know I seemed to see myself dangling at the yardarm of the schooner, and knew, too, that Rance would be tortured for being with me. To even attempt an escape was now impossible, and there was nothing for it but to let go the mainsheet, lower the jib, and wait for the end, though the lack of sails hardly stayed our progress on the strong tide.

As I have said, I had no notion of what I would next do, but despite the vision of myself kicking the empty air I knew what I would not do — I would not hang. I felt the pistol under the cloak I had put on, and figured out the best way to quit the world

whether by bullet or by drowning. But the end had not yet arrived, and for it — the hopeless moment — I waited, standing in the cockpit with my hand on my now useless wheel, until the boat drew enough for the officer to shout:

“Ahoy, there! What sloop is that?”

“The *Gloosecap*, out of Sag Harbor,” I answered, with my heart beating like a drum, for I thought I recognized the ring of the voice. Then the last rag of my hope fell as the boat ranged up. For as the bowman fastened on to the sloop’s larboard channel, thus bringing the sternsheets of the pinnace alongside the cockpit, I gave myself up for lost, for there sat Lieutenant Bull.

He appeared much the same as when I had last seen him, only that now he was pale instead of red, and looked as if he had been ill — as he probably had, after my fist. To my utter astonishment, he did not leap on me figuratively, nor in person. In short, he did not appear to know me, and for this I thanked my lack of beard, my bloated face, my changed dress, and the fact that he thought me dead.

It was then that hope was born again, though if he failed to recognize me he would hardly fail to remember the sloop the *Dragon* had chased and missed. How was I to provide for that? My brain was work-

ing as it had never worked before when he spoke again.

“What are you doing here?” he demanded, in his old pompous manner, and I knew that to cringe or show fright to such a character would be fatal.

“I bear despatches to General Howe,” I answered, as stoutly as my racing heart would let me, “and I have no intention of being stopped here,” I continued, as an idea sprang to my mind.

“Oh, you have not, ha? But you will be stopped.”

“I think not,” I retorted. “I have His Majesty’s protection, and have been delayed long enough, having already lost two days in hiding from a rebel schooner that chased me while sailing off the Thimbles.”

At that he brought his hands together with a great oath.

“A rebel schooner chase you, you villain! An’ you know not the king’s flag when you see it?” he shouted. “It was yonder vessel that chased you. I know you now. And we thought you a Yankee going to wreck. Why did you not lay to?”

I forced a laugh then. “Why should I?” I asked. “Yon vessel is of rebel rake and rig, and do you think I was to be cozened by a red flag? ’Fore Heaven! I wish I had known you. ’Twould

have saved me delay and a cursing from Howe, let alone a fright and a hole in my sail."

"Perhaps you were right," he said, holding on to the rail. "But I'll have a look at your papers."

"You will look at my protection," I answered, gathering courage.

"Don't dictate to a king's officer, you rascal," he returned. "Drop your anchor; you are drifting too fast."

"And will drift if I do," I said. "If you know these waters as do I, you will know that I have no length of cable to hold in twenty fathoms in such a run of tide."

"Then come about and make for the schooner, sir."

"No, by the Lord! nor will I do that either. I hold to the right the king has given me. I tender you my credentials, and if you interfere with my progress you will personally pay for it. Howe will be pleased to know how he is flouted."

"You are an impudent rascal," returned Bull, biting his lips as I referred to Howe's possible anger. I had him there, for Admiral Howe was brother to General Howe, and each resented a slight given the other.

In the man's hesitation in enforcing his last order

I saw my salvation, and before he had a chance to say more I drew the paper from my pocket and shouted for Rance to fetch a lantern.

And I held the light as Bull read the protection, which was both explicit and forcible. He perused it carefully, turning it over and over in his hands, and had he doubted it I know not what I would have done save played my last card and ended the terrible strain. But he looked up finally.

“Where are your despatches?”

“Where none can see them,” I answered, sticking to my rôle. “Do you think I would risk their being found were I overhauled by a rebel?”

“Well, perhaps you have done right, after all,” he said in his surly way. “But you take a cursed high hand for one holding so low a commission. I seem to know your voice. Where have I seen you before?”

“Heaven knows,” I said, almost recoiling. “I have met many in my day and found them worthy of forgetting.”

“Which is an insult to me, you low villain. Were you ashore, and without this paper, I’d have you on your knees to me, Sir Quince. Go your way, and I’ll see that I remember you on the next occasion. Push off, there! Oars! Give way!”

The next moment the boat swept from our side, but now my knees trembled so that I could scarcely stand. I looked after the pinnace as it went into the deepening dusk, and shook my fist at it.

“Twice we have been face to face, Lieutenant Bull,” I muttered. “And a third time is likely to come. Beware of it.”

CHAPTER IX

ON THE WING

I HOISTED the jib, sheeted home, and continued on my way, though still fearful that some suspicion might turn Bull back to me. But he did not come, and for a time we were swept along until at last it grew dark.

In the rush of the tide and in helpless fashion the sloop's wild drifting finally frightened me, for we swept ahead sometimes broadside, and often stern on and at the mercy of the swift swirl of water which at any moment might put us on the rocks of the narrow passage. So when we had gone as far as Flushing Bay, the tide setting us into it, and the wind having fallen to a flat calm, I made a shift to get into shallow water near the shore and there cast anchor for the night. I did not know what might happen by so doing, but was fairly certain we would go to wreck in Hell Gate, if we continued on with no light to guide us nor wind to give us direction.

We lowered the sails and made all ready for a start

in the morning, but I was so upset that there was little sleep for me, though Rance was soon snoring.

Left alone, I sat in the cockpit listening to each sound. Within pistol-shot was the land, black with trees, but from it there came nothing to alarm me, until just before dawn. I was then nodding from sheer exhaustion, but leaped broad awake as I heard my name called.

It was "Marcy — Talbot Marcy!" and drifted in a sort of clear whisper from the water toward the shore.

I knew the call had not come from Rance, who was curled up in the galley, nor would he have dared to be so familiar. I stood up and looked about me.

The east bore a pallid streak low on the horizon, and the coming day bid fair to be a hot one, for not a cloud broke the fairness of the sky. I wondered if I had been dreaming, when again I heard my name, this time plainly, together with a splashing in the water, and then, in the ghastly light I saw the head of a man who was swimming and coming from the shore straight for the *Gloosecap*.

Like the traveler in the desert, I felt that here I could meet no one who was not an enemy, and so, seeing the man was alone, I drew my pistol and waited,

prepared either to shoot or knock my visitor in the head, as the case might require.

But I did neither, for as the swimmer came under the jib boom and grasped the bobstay for support, I recognized the face of young Linton, he whom I had last seen lashed to a grating on the *Dragon's* deck, and for whose sake, in a measure, I stood where I did.

"Thank God!" he gasped, pulling himself from the water and scrambling aboard.

"You had better," said I, "for I was about to make an end of you. What brings you here, and how did you know me?"

His chest heaved a moment, but he finally caught his breath. "They are after me," he said. "I was in the boat that went out to you last evening. I knew you though Bull did not, and then I resolved to get away, as you did, by swimming. I can stand it no longer. My back is laced in stripes, and I would rather die than stay aboard the *Dragon*. In the middle watch I went over the side and got ashore, but had hardly landed when my going was discovered. I heard the row. I ran through the woods until I struck this water, and then it seemed like Providence that you were anchored here."

"And you did a fine thing by coming, seeing that if you are found here we will both be hanged to-

gether." I was bitter against him that he should jeopardize my own safety.

"Nay, I mean not to stay," he said, in a pitiable fright. "Only put me across the bay; it will give me a start on them. I have a plan; it is to get to Jersey, where I will be safe. I ask you to help me again. You will not fail me, Marcy? Mayhap some day I can square the score."

"And is that all you ask? Will you go now?"

"Aye — but tell me how you are still alive, for I have thought you dead, and for my sake."

I told him a thing or two in a hurry, ending by saying that the best favor he could do me now was to consider me as dead.

"What is the *Dragon* doing at Whitestone?" I asked in conclusion.

"Taking in water. And Bull is about to leave her for a billet ashore, so we hear."

"May grace go with him," said I. "The *Dragon* may be less of a hell for them that remain."

"I know not," he returned. "But for the sake of saving me from it, get me to the opposite shore. There is not a minute to be lost."

So he went off, with Rance rowing him in the small boat. He kissed my hand, man that he was, in an effusion of thanks, and I waited the boat's return,

mightily afraid the boy's pursuers would appear ere I could get away.

But no alarm came from the direction of the woods, Linton's pursuers probably thinking the deserter had struck inland, nor was I molested in any way, for no boat, great or small, broke the face of the stream for many hours. Thereabouts the water was too narrow for large vessels to loiter, and the tide too swift for small boats to do more than pass in a hurry, and, indeed, small boats were scarce, the enemy having swept the waterways of such craft as would likely be of use to them.

It was within a few minutes of sunrise when Rance came back, saying he had set Linton ashore at the edge of the thick wood, and so with my mind free of the refugee, I hoisted anchor and went on toward whatever fate was in store for me.

But fate seemed to have turned kind, for a time, at least, as on the way down nothing untoward happened; and it was not until I had pushed through the seethe of Hell Gate that the trip suffered interruption. And then it was by a patrol — a whaleboat manned and officered — but it caused little delay, as the young fellow in charge quickly showed proper respect for me when I thrust Quince's commission into his face. He did not cavil at it for an instant, but allowed me

to sail on past the island now known as Blackwalls, even bidding me Godspeed.

I thought my troubles fairly over then, and finally dropped anchor in a bight of the Manhattan shore well-nigh opposite Wallabout, where the prison-ship, *Jersey*, lay fast in the mud, her deck at that time swarming with captives, and I thanked God that I was not one of them.

I hardly knew what my next move should be. Down the river toward Nuttings Island (now called "Governors"), lay a mort of the king's ships, and I heard the chiming of "four bells" from two small frigates near me, it then going to ten o'clock. On one side of the river lay the heights of Brooklyn, fair and green; on the other I could see the steeples belonging to the great city. I had winged my way in safety so far, and now lay off the long line of British earthworks which, I afterward found, had been thrown across the island from river to river.

And hereabouts the evidences of war and man's fear of man were thick enough. Breastworks capped every height of land, and it hardly needed a glass to bring out the flash of a red coat from almost any direction. Not a rifle-shot away a sentry patrolled the landing near which arose a huge alarm beacon ready for instant firing, the fellow's polished musket

sending out a spark of reflected sunlight when he moved, as if the piece had exploded. Fifty cannon were in sight, and the water was alive with boats passing between the outlying ships and the shores.

But I had little leisure to observe these things, and less to form a plan of action, as almost at once my movements were cut for me. For hardly had my anchor reached bottom and the sloop swung to the flow of the tide, when a guard-boat came dashing from the shore, and when I pulled forth my protection for the third time the officer in command looked at me, then swore a great oath.

“You are not John Quince!” said he.

“I am not,” I answered readily enough. “John Quince is my uncle, and he lies at home with an ague.” Then I showed my packet for General Howe. He looked at it with doubt in his eye. “Who sent these?” he asked sharply.

The question took my breath away, for I had not provided for it, but at once there came to me the name on the note sent by my cousin through Debby, the words of which had burned into my memory.

“Captain Archibald Harvey,” I answered with but little delay.

“And does he command at Sag Harbor?” was the next question.

"He does," I answered at a venture.

"You are a liar!" he returned. "Get into the boat. We'll come to the bottom of this thing!"

Here was a paralyzing reversal of fortune, and for a moment I was in nearly the same panic as when I sighted the *Dragon* at Whitestone, though I think my face showed nothing of it. And by only a narrow margin had I saved myself from being a complete fool for I had had it in my mind to proclaim myself as Quince when there came the timely thought that the king's messenger could not fail to be known to the water-guard. However, I was in deeply enough, and there was nothing to do but obey the command though it were a good omen that Rance had not been questioned, nor was he included in the orders to go ashore. So with an effort at a light word to the negro, and telling him I would soon be back — though I was by no means sure of it — I stepped into the boat.

Though mighty anxious as to the outcome of this check I saw I had no reason to be hopeless, as in a measure I had possessed the wit to provide against this very coil. And that was by having the paper denouncing me to Sir John Dirck, and Carey Drummond's pass, snugly bestowed in the ballast of the sloop; the latter I had made a mistake in accepting,

but I hesitated to destroy it. These papers could not damn me until they were found, an unlikely contingency, and to make the outlook more encouraging I realized that I had not yet been asked my name, which was fortunate. For had I given it as Baxter or claimed that of Quince I would have been in hot water when it came to the discovery of the letter to Isaac Foster in which my true name was given. This paper still lay in my pocket.

The first thing that was done was to take me to the guard-house and there strip and search me, I protesting with proper force and an assumption of injured dignity. The belt with the gold and papers was found.

The report to Howe, which had been carefully resealed before I left New Haven, the searchers dared not open, but every other paper was read, including the one to Isaac Foster, the man through whom my cousin had hoped to ruin me.

At last I was brought before a uniformed functionary bearing the rank of major. He was a kindly faced gentleman, a mighty rarity in the British army, as I afterward found, who seemed to resent having been disturbed, but he questioned me closely.

“And who are you?” he began.

“My name is Talbot Marcy,” I replied, with my

plan clearly outlined, and then I told a garbled story of how I had volunteered to come to New York with the papers for Howe in order to preserve the standing of my uncle, John Quince.

"And you did well," he said, when I had finished, after which he questioned me at length, jotting down my answers with the pen he alternately wrote or dressed his gray hair with, and nodding as I went along.

I explained my mistake regarding the commander at Sag Harbor on the ground of ignorance, and when I had done he was almost apologetic.

"You have acquitted yourself bravely," he said. "Your story is straight, your papers without flaw, but your entry is irregular, you not being John Quince, but his nephew. We have to be cursedly careful. Suppose, now, that you were a rebel spy?"

"And were that so," said I quickly, "would his excellency ever see the packet I bring? Doubtless the rebels would like the information it must contain."

"'Tis true!" he returned, with an air of conviction; then he spoke to the man who had all the while been standing at my side, musket in hand.

"Sergeant, take this person to Isaac Foster. If the old skinflint is willing to vouch for him as Quince's

nephew, take him to headquarters. Give this to his excellency and abide by his orders."

He folded the paper on which he had been writing, and handed it to the soldier. I would have been less shocked had he struck me in the face, for at his words I was completely taken aback, though holding myself unmoved.

Isaac Foster! My heart almost stood still. Could he be a friend to Carey Drummond, and anything but an enemy to me? What did he know of my cousin's hate for me? And would he not know that John Quince was not my uncle? It looked as if I were going deeper and deeper into difficulties.

But there was nothing I could do or say to avert the impending disaster, though it was something of a comfort that I was so far unsuspected as to have returned to me my belt, money and papers, together with my pistol, the last of which might yet prove a mighty grim friend.

As I walked along the streets by the side of the red-coated, non-commissioned officer, I realized I was on the most perilous ground I had yet trod, that I was in the lion's den and menaced by a danger from which there seemed no escape. Why had I not hidden Foster's letter with the one to Sir John Dirck?

At that moment my mental agony was increased

by a thought that struck me cold despite the heat of the day. Suppose they should question Rance before I had a chance to see him? Even if I escaped the Scylla of Foster, I would be wrecked by being cast on the Charybdis of the name of Baxter, for so the darky, alive to his instructions, would call me. I was beset on all sides.

For one irrational moment I was tempted to dash my fist into the face of the good-natured and unsuspecting sergeant who sauntered along as if in no hurry, and who, I was thankful to feel, did not treat me as a dangerous character. I might easily have knocked him down and trusted to my legs, but the very hopelessness of the move steadied me, and we went on, I with my mind so turned inward that the way might have been a desert without life or motion for all I saw of it. Presently my guide turned into Queen Street, and brought me to myself by saying:

“Yonder lies the house of Isaac Foster.”

“And what manner of man is he?” I asked.

“By looks, a Quaker,” he answered. “But, by nature, a grasping gold-eater, with an eye to gain, and a devil for hating disloyalty to the king.”

It was a sinister description, and I clutched the pistol in my waistband, though I meant its bullet for

none but myself when driven to the last extremity, and it looked to be near.

Like a man ascending the scaffold, I went up the low, white marble steps that led to Isaac Foster's door, and the loud knock given by the soldier sounded to me like the signal of the executioner. I have faced death more than once, as will be seen, but I aver that never did I cringe before the threatened clutch of its cold hand as I did at that minute.

CHAPTER X

ISAAC FOSTER

BUT the ensuing matter was well beyond anything I had anticipated. The man who opened the door was nigh upon sixty years of age, white-haired, and bent; but, though his rusty dress proclaimed him Quaker, his eyes showed all the shrewdness of a man of the world. Now, while I had never, to my knowledge, seen him before in my life, he gave a decided start when he saw me standing there — just such a start as one might make who thought he saw a ghost — and, ignoring the sergeant, he stared at me.

It was the soldier who broke the silence.

“An’ so ye know him, friend Isaac! Colonel Cavendish sends me with this man, he being taken two hours ago. He has a letter to ye, an’ that much I know. Will ye vouch for him as Talbot Marcy?”

There was hardly an instant of hesitation.

“That he is a Marcy I will swear,” returned the old man in a strong voice, though without taking his

eyes from me; "and that his father was a loyal servant to His Majesty. But I know not what this man has done."

"No more do we," said the sergeant, "save that he has claimed to be a king's messenger through his uncle, John Quince, and he is held under suspicion. Dost know Quince?"

The old man's eyes seemed to turn inward for a second, and my heart stuck in my throat; then he answered: "Aye, I know Quince, John Quince of Sag — another loyal servant to His Majesty — but I have not charge of his affairs."

"An' his affairs are not in the matter," said the sergeant, sticking to the point. "The question is, do ye know Quince to be this man's uncle?"

I looked at the Quaker, with my whole soul in my face, belike, while his own seemed as hard as iron. He hesitated in his answer, and again there came the inward turn of his eyes before he spoke, but they were straight enough when he answered, and something like a smile broke his set features.

"Aye, Quince is his uncle, his uncle by marriage. And thee say he has a letter for me?"

I almost fell against the door-post, so great was my surprise at the unlooked-for and outrageous lie, backing up my own statement. Had the soldier at

my side been suspicious, or even observant, he must have marked my consternation, which was hardly less than that I felt when I knew I was to be taken before the man whom I thought could do nothing but discredit me. I could scarcely believe my own ears, and was far from accounting for the Quaker's attitude. That he had known my father, and loved him, and had recognized me through the family resemblance, which I knew was strong, might well be; but to state that John Quince was my uncle — a man who could never pretend to my social caste — was astounding; while to assert that 'Squire Marcy had been a loyal servant to George III was a falsity.

I knew not what to make of these things, albeit I felt like one who had escaped being hanged while the noose was about his neck; but I held out the letter, unable to speak a word. Foster took it and read it there and then, but his face gave me no indication of what was going on in his mind. Presently he folded it as if its contents were no great matter, and said: "Thee has brought this at a fortunate time, my son. Come in, friends. Sergeant, a pipe on the back porch might solace thee, since I must ask thee to wait. I have money for Mr. Marcy. Will thee trust him with me?"

"Faith, since Howe trusts ye, I see no reason why

I should not; more freely, if there be a mug along with the pipe," was the ready response.

"The mug thee shall have," said Foster, leading the way into the house; "and I promise to hand Mr. Marcy over to you in something like an hour."

I was far too dazed to see or think clearly at that time, and I know not what more passed in the way of words until a few minutes later, when, with the compliant and easy-going sergeant installed on the back porch, I followed the old man into a room upstairs. I hardly marked it then, but later I knew it was furnished as part bedroom and part office, but I was impressed with the safe in the wall, and the piles of musty papers tied with tape and stuck in any and every available space.

Once within the room the Quaker closed the door and sat down opposite me, facing me squarely, and wiping the perspiration from his brow as he took a long look at me. Finally he brought his hand to his thigh with a loud slap, but his voice was not raised as he said: "Well, young man, thee hast had sufficient effrontery!"

Not knowing what to say I said nothing, but in face of the fact that I saw no immediate prospect of being hanged or shot, my spirits were fast coming back; moreover, I no longer feared this man. He

took no notice of my silence, but went on: "My son, when I first saw thee I thought thee as good as lost; for it is not many a spy that gets into their clutches and out again.

"A spy!" I exclaimed, laying my hand on my pistol.

"Hush!" he returned, lifting his hand and looking toward the closed door. "Would thee hang thyself? or dost thee hope to deceive Isaac Foster? Listen to me, my son, for we have scant time to talk. I have hazarded much for thee; I am thy friend, even as I was the friend of thy father, and there be things I would learn of thee before we proceed."

"Aye?" said I, sinking back; "but how did you know —?"

"How did I know thee?" he interrupted. "I did not, nor do I yet know more than that thee are thy father's son. I have not seen thee since thee was a toddling lad at thy mother's knee; but thee said thy name was Marcy, and thy face carried out the truth of thy words, for thee have the same eagle cast to thy countenance as had thy father before thee. It was thy father that saved thee this day! Stop!" he continued, as I was about to speak. "Thee said that John Quince was thy uncle, and by that falsehood I knew thee to be in trouble; I knew it was for

a purpose that thee claimed relationship to one of low degree. Moreover, I saw thee was a prisoner; and thy face told much to one who makes it a study to read men. Did I need to know more? It is my business to think quickly. I loved thy father even as David loved Jonathan, and know that no evil could spring from him and bear his likeness. Now tell me thy story in a few words."

As I looked at the old man my heart warmed to him, and with only his speech and my faith for a warrant, and what he had already done for me, I told him all there was to tell. It took time, but when I had finished his face shone.

"Surely thee are a son of Anak!" he exclaimed. "And thee be in sore straits the result of which God alone can tell. It is perilous business, and one in which I can be of little help. Does thee need money?"

"Yes — and information that perhaps you can give. Where is Dorothy Hilton?"

"Where I fear thee cannot reach her, my son," he said, with a solemn shake of his white head. "She lives with the Apthorpes, the mansion being well beyond the lines, and thee have no pass save such as would damn thee if used. Ah, me! I fear the girl has grown to be a rampant Tory. I see

her but seldom, and then she talks so strong for the king and is so bitter against his enemies that I have lost my respect for her."

"Is she to marry Sir John Dirck?"

"I know not — but it is likely. Major Sir John Dirck is a relative of the Aphthorpes, from oversea, and he spends much of his time at the mansion."

I winced at that, and yet it was what I was prepared for, for all that I had tried to convince myself that the girl was unchanged and unchangeable. Time and absence had worked on her, as it does on all mankind, and the old love was likely to be off for the new. I was bitter for the moment. Was it for this that I had risked everything? My incentive to daring seemed lost; I would be useless. I certainly felt so for the moment, and had an idea of returning to the sloop, as soon as I could get from the surrounding coil, and sailing away from a field in which I felt already beaten. But then there came to me the fact that I had a charge as broad as was my selfish interest narrow, and moreover, that I need not be convinced by one man's surmise. I was deeply in love, a state in which one is a poor judge of anything, and I had sense enough to pull myself together that I might not betray my weakness to Foster lest he lose his respect for me.

“And regarding my estate?” I asked, to change the subject.

“It is in my hands,” he said. “I hold it by court appointment and your father’s wish, pending settlement, and in these days the law is a laggard when there be no pickings for those in authority. The estate is in part entailed, and thy cousin Carey, of whom I abet thee in calling a villain, contests the will as nearest of kin. This would be to rob Miss Hilton, were thee not living, but as thee are, both her claim and his are dead. His animus against thee is plain.”

“Aye, and I wish it were as plain how I might get to speak with the lady,” I said. “I would take my dismissal from her mouth, but from none other. It is but fair to her — to us both.”

“Both fair and necessary,” he returned; “and though I can give thee but little to hope for, I am sorry I cannot bring thee together here. And yet there is a way,” he said, looking up quickly as if struck by an idea. “Thee may see this woman, and perchance talk with her, if thee be willing to take a risk.”

“I have proved my willingness.”

“Yea, that thee have done; and now I will tell thee this. My position is delicate and anomalous.

Though I am in high favor with Howe and others, even for the money I command, yet I serve my country while I seem to serve the king. Now I am in thy hands, even as thee are in mine."

"You — a spy?" I exclaimed.

"Yea — and nay. I am too old to gather and transmit information, but I can help those who would."

"And how can I see Dorothy?"

"This way. The royal governor gives a ball in his mansion in Hanover Square in four nights from this. It will be a frivolous mask, yet all of high society will be there, and Miss Hilton, doubtless. Thee might go masked and without invitation, if thee bear thyself bravely; but it were a risk I would not have thee take were thee less pressed. Thee should get from the city."

"And leave all undone!" I exclaimed, suddenly resolved to go the whole pace, wherever it might take me. "How could I face Tallmadge, or be worthy of your protection?"

"'Tis the hot blood of youth!" said the Quaker, though I saw my protest had pleased him; "and mayhap it is but fair and thy duty to fight in secret while others fight in the field. I fear me I would be read out of meeting were my heart known."

"I shall not run away for the present," I returned. "Have you no knowledge of the Maude Baxter for whom I must look?"

"No, nor ever heard of such a person, though that is not strange."

"Then to the ball I will go," I said with decision. "I might see Dorothy and would surely have a chance to put the test question to many there. I would be no better than a coward to hold back."

"Hot blood! hot blood! Do as thee see thy duty. And now go, else yonder soldier suspect there is more than money between us. That thee shall have, but I would warn thee to come not to me too often. I must not be jeopardized. When this war is over, if thee be alive, thee will find thy estate intact. Heaven bless thee, my son! Thee had better go."

When I left the house on Queen Street, I was richer by fifty pounds — and so rich in spirits that never had I been more ready to meet man as an enemy than when I knew I had one friend in the great city of iniquity. And this, too, in the face of the fact that I feared Dorothy was lost to me and Maude Baxter far from my ken. Good spirits! Aye, and abounding health, and faith in myself in all save my ability to keep my hold on my well-nigh lost love. These three things, the greatest man may have, were

my capital that day, and God knows I soon had reason to need it all.

I stepped into the street by the side of the comfortable sergeant, a different individual as compared with my state when I entered the house. The soldier was garrulous.

"Now, Colonel Cavendish does wrong to call old Isaac a skinflint!" he said, as we walked together toward "headquarters." "There was all the ale a man might want, an' three yards o' clay to break, an' I listed. They tell me his cellar is lined with gold he has gotten his hands on, an' Howe an' the rest love him the more for it. Did he give you your money?"

"He was close about it," I answered. "What is Foster — a lawyer?"

"Aye, an' strong for His Majesty. He's a devil for harrying the estates of rebels, then lending their money at usury. But he is one that never lies, not even to Howe. That is why all trust him. His word is better than Howe's bond — which is saying little enough. But here we be at headquarters."

The headquarters of General Howe had not then been changed to the Kennedy mansion at number one, on the Broadway. At that date the doughty British commander held forth on Hanover Square, near the

residence of the royal governor, Robinson. As we passed the latter house, with its double sentries at the door, I wondered what it would hold for me four nights hence, if it came to my getting in, and without dreaming the truth, walked on, and finally passed between the scarlet-backed guards, through the broad hall and into the waiting-room of the Commander-in-chief of His Majesty's forces in America.

It was now so close to noon that the room was empty and it was not many minutes before I heard myself announced as a "king's messenger for his excellency," and was soon after ushered into the great man's presence, the sergeant now sticking closely at my side as if to make up for his previous laxity of guard.

It was a gorgeous chamber this, and had little about it to suggest that here was the principal seat of war. From the empty fireplace with its fine tracery of gilt on the woodwork; from the polished floor; from the damask curtains to the rich decorations on the ceiling, every detail of the room spoke of wealth and luxury. General Howe lolled on an embroidered sofa, his uniform unbelted, a broad-faced, rotund man in the prime of life, with sensuality stamped on every line of his countenance, albeit he carried an air of great refinement. But aside from his rank there

was little about him to command attention. I marked the fairness of his hands, over which fell cuffs of lace, and saw that they were almost effeminate, and as he read the letter from Cavendish which was passed to him by his aide, he reached for the wine glass that stood on a marble-topped table by his side, and sipped its contents with soft smackings of his full lips, without raising his eyes from the paper. He made no remark when he finished the report, but tossed it lightly to the table and passed his hand over his smooth forehead. I tendered the packet from Sag Harbor, with a low bow, as I had seen the sergeant do, for by then the aide had returned to his great mahogany table which was littered with documents.

The general tore off the cover and glanced down the closely written pages, then threw them aside and again picked up the letter from Colonel Cavendish. As he finished reading it the second time he raised his rather listless eyes to mine and looked hard at me.

"You have seen service?" he asked, with unlooked-for abruptness.

"Yes, your excellency."

"Where?"

"In His Majesty's navy, your excellency."

"Your address is that of a gentleman."

"I claim to be one, sir."

"From where?"

"Sag Harbor, your excellency."

"Ah! Have you rank?"

"No, your excellency. It is that I am working for." Which was no lie.

"And are, therefore, not toplofty," he said, with half a smile, then he turned to his already writing aide. "By my faith, Danby, Mr. Marcy looks to be the man we want for that matter my brother spoke about. Are you ready for special duty at any time?" he asked, directing the question to me.

I saw my chance.

"I am at present a prisoner, your excellency — and that for doing what I saw was a duty."

"So it appears," he returned, knitting his brows. "And in the face of it I should have thought Cavenish's judgment better. This paper speaks of sending you to Isaac Foster." He turned to the sergeant, who was standing like a ramrod. "Did he vouch for your man?" The soldier saluted.

"He did, sir; and gave him the money."

"Money! What money?" The words came out in jerks.

"'Twas the payment of a draft," I interposed,

“made by my cousin Captain Carey Drummond of your army. He was wounded, sir, in the action around Brooklyn.”

General Howe pulled himself upright. “Drummond! I have it. He was aide to Grant that day, eh, Danby? I think he was sent East, eh? — eh?”

“You are right, General,” returned the obsequious officer.

“Then I have Mr. Marcy’s standing!” Howe turned to the sergeant. “Begone and report your prisoner’s discharge to your commander.”

The man wheeled on his heel and was off like a shot. As the door closed behind him the general relaxed the frown on his face and said: “I can hardly ask a better recommendation of any man than that he has the faith of Isaac Foster. You have been fortunate to-day, sir. Where can you be found?”

“On board my sloop, your excellency,” I said, being forced into naming a residence.

“Better find quarters ashore, and report when you are located,” was the return. “I think I shall wish you for a service. When shall he call, Danby?”

“The admiral is not yet ready, General. Perhaps in a week matters will be in shape,” returned the aide, who, I was conscious, was eyeing me.

“Make it ten days,” said Howe, thus falling into

the procrastination which rendered most of his undertakings abortive. "That is all for the present, sir."

It was my dismissal and I turned to leave the room; but at that moment the door was thrown open by the attending orderly, who saluted, clapped his heels together, and announced:

"Mistress Apthorpe and Miss Dorothy Hilton to see his excellency."

I felt myself turn rigid. Howe let go an impatient oath and frowned. "Show them up to the blue room," he commanded, irritably. "You will have to see them, Danby; they cannot be ignored nor can I be bothered. It is probably about some feminine squabble regarding precedence at the governor's ball. Promise them anything — and then forget about it. I said that was all, Marcy."

I unsprung myself, saluted, and passed out of the room in a semi-dazed state, going through the hall and into the reception chamber like one in a dream. Save for the flunky at the double doors the room was empty, though I had thought to find it otherwise. Dorothy was not there, and I quickly surmised that the general's command had been promptly obeyed and the ladies had been shown to the floor above. As I returned to the hall I heard a light laugh on the broad stairway, but the laugh did not sound like

that of the girl I loved though I felt sure it came from her. It was mocking, and lacked the ring of genuineness; I felt a sense of bitterness as I heard it. If that was Dorothy's laugh she was indeed lost to me.

When I left Howe's headquarters I was by far more bewildered and less sure of myself than when I went in; and that, too, from the simple fact of having heard the name and felt the presence of the one who had been, and yet was, the mainspring of my movements. My mental state was peculiar. I was not unhappy, neither had I now the least fear for myself. The goddess of Good Fortune seemed to have picked me out for her pet and made me the beneficiary of official dullness and happy coincidence, though I did not lose sight of the possibility of my lucky streak being but the prelude to misfortune. But the run of recent events might have unsettled a better head than mine. Within the space of three or four hours I had been captured, suspected as being a spy, and looked for nothing less than hanging; instead of which latter I had been vouched for by the man I most feared, had been furnished a sum of money, set free, heard my captor criticised, and then, on the strength of a deception, had been the same as engaged as an agent by the highest function-

ary in America. Lastly, for a moment I had found myself under the same roof with the woman for the knowledge of whose sentiments toward myself I had risked my life.

And to me that last was the most important of the wonderful train of events. For the moment all other dangers became secondary to that comprised in Dorothy's possible, aye, probable change of heart. Was it true that such a woman could alter? Had the glamour of name, fortune, and station made her forget her plighted word so easily? The faith of man is small as compared to that of woman, yet I felt that I would never have allowed time, politics or aught else to have made me inconstant without more proof of perfidy than had ever come to her.

As I stood in the street opposite military headquarters, fully intending to wait there until Dorothy came out and then and there determine how I stood, my heart was on fire with longing, my soul torn by uncertainty. I thought nothing of my personal appearance, my nondescript and fairly shabby costume, and failed to consider the shock I would occasion by making myself known; neither did I figure on the chance of being rudely thrust aside by the gigantic liveried footman who stood waiting by the door of the elegantly appointed chariot drawn up at

the curb. I was idiotic then, as I have been before and since, and had the first fact brought sharply home to me by one of the outside sentries, who left his post by the entrance of headquarters and coming to me, bade me go about my business and not loiter unless I wished to find lodgment in the guard-house.

I came to myself in time to prevent knocking down the insolent unit of English service, and recognized that for all my present liberty my affairs were like a pyramid turned upside down, and on anything but a firm foundation. True, I was free; but for how long if by chance Rance had been examined since I had seen him? It was a question not difficult of answer, but it put spurs into me and brought me to realize that without life love were nothing, and that my first duty was to myself.

So I made a hurried exit from the vicinity, and my way back to the landing, where, with something of a high hand, though with many misgivings, I demanded to be taken out to the sloop; and this was done with much more respect than had been shown me when I was taken from it. The sergeant had evidently made a highly colored report of my reception at headquarters.

To my infinite relief I found that the faithful

negro had not been tampered with, doubtless owing to the fact that in those days the word of an African was considered of no more value than his life — which was but one remove from that of a dog.

It did not take long to place Rance straight regarding the new aspect of affairs, and that done, I sat down and thought, the result being the conclusion that if I stayed in the city for more than ten days it would end awkwardly for me, as of course I never intended returning to Howe. Dorothy I might see in four days; but Maude Baxter bid fair to be a thorn in my conscience. Should I run and leave all undone save that dictated by selfishness? I could hardly think so.

One matter was certain; not to create suspicion I must obey orders and put myself ashore, then report my new residence; to do less meant unnecessary risk. The *Gloosecap* would remain where she was, ready for me at any time, and living in the city would make me less a mark for conjecture and inquiry.

I acted upon this determination, leaving Rance to live on board and take charge of the boat, and it cost me a pretty penny to fit myself as became a gentleman — though not a gay one — and then I

took an upper chamber in the "King's Arms," that hostelry being central on King Street (now Pine), and near the Broadway.

And now if my life broadened it surely was not sweetened under the new conditions. I assume no excessive ideas of virtue, but a single day of it lessened my respect for my kind. Under Howe, New York was not as vicious as it became later under Sir Henry Clinton; but it was bad enough. Vice raised its head unmasked and was unrebuked, and though there was undoubted virtue and sweetness in private life, of this I saw nothing; I drifted on the raw current of the streets, and in the way of drunkenness, rank injustice, cruelty and frivolity, saw things that sickened me; and after having been but three days in the heart of Gotham I had accomplished nothing save to work myself into a fever of impatience. Then I discovered, with consternation, that under the wholesale robbery practiced on all classes my cash in hand would barely last out the ten days I had allowed myself.

Everything ran to society and social position. Society! God save the mark! Was it possible that the foolish, vain, hypocritical and shallow stratum that rose to the top, could be in truth, society? That which saved humanity appeared to be beyond my

ken. Of women of any sort I came in contact with none; it is of the men I speak. Honor, or a thing that took its place, demanded the most attention and a continual defense; and it was those whose so-called honor was in rags who were most disposed to whip out a rapier in its vindication. Trickery went under the name of quickness of wit, while debauchery in all its forms never caused a frown or shake of the head.

All the world seemed to be at war — first in armies, second in factions, and then as individuals, while every man distrusted his fellow and worshiped the one in rank above him. Aye, I saw it, and was weary of it all within the space of three days.

I had not been able to get where I might ask the key-question anent Maude Baxter, nor could I see how I was to manage it. I knew the location of the Apthorpe mansion, which lay half-way to Kingsbridge on the Bloomingdale Road; but I had no pass to go beyond the lines. I had come to a full stop, unless the coming ball would open up my way.

And of this ball I heard enough. Every blood in town was talking of it, though I could gather no more than that it was to be a grand affair. For myself, I was still determined to go, and, indeed, was living on the hope of what it might bring. I could

see no risk, once I passed the door — which might be a difficulty, but one with which I held I had wit enough to cope. Such an opportunity to meet Dorothy and perchance find Maude Baxter would not occur again, for in the way I was compelled to live I might be in New York for months and never have a word with a great dame, and now I had only six days left.

CHAPTER XI

THE BALL

NOW, common sense told me that if I was to go to Governor Robinson's mask without an invitation, it was to be in a way to attract as little attention as possible. Masked, surely; as had it not been a mask I would not have dared attempt it. I would go disguised; I would leave it disguised. I would go in a plain domino that would cause no comment, yet still permit of my being armed without ostentation; for by this I wore a sword that I might be a gentleman, as every gentleman in those days carried steel at hip as a badge of blood and breeding.

But I could come by no domino, so had to content myself with the long gown and cowl of a white friar, which I obtained in a shop near the burned district, it having been used before on like occasions. It answered every purpose, the cowl, with my mask, covering my head back and front; and so the next day I laid out more money than I could well afford in hiring a chair to carry me. It was well toward mid-

night before I chose to venture forth. By then I knew the riot would be high.

I met mine host as I came down the stairway, but he only smiled and asked no questions as I passed out in my strange rig. Every one who was any one was going to the ball.

Governor Robinson's mansion was ablaze with lights, and Hanover Square packed with chariots, chairs, footmen, carriers, link-bearers, and the rabble that always attend the going forth of gentility.

As soon as my chair was set on the curb and I had issued from it, my ticket was demanded by a gorgeous flunky; but I shoved the man aside with a round oath, as was the fashion, and the crowd of on-lookers closed round us in an instant. Through them I elbowed, carrying my covered head high and using the free ends of my rope girdle to lash those who blocked me, they giving way in abject servility, and in a moment more found myself in the nest of loyalty where, had I been known, a hundred swords would have been drawn against me.

There was noise and gayety enough. Genteel as was the society, loud laughter and wine-tuned voices were the order, even at that early hour. Exaggerated politeness and not a few round oaths told how the great throng had already become debauched.

I never felt more lonely ; yet, aping the affectation of the average blood, I pushed my way through the crowd in the hall, with little of ceremony toward my fellows, but with the utmost deference toward women, that being also the mode at a time when to kiss my lady's fingers one instant and flay her character the next was a part of fashionable life.

To me, never at home in a crush, knowing little of gay life save the glimpse I had had of it while in London, and used to the solitude of the sea, my surroundings bewildered me, and I was thankful that a mask hid my face. But confidence returned when I discovered that I was well-nigh ignored, and then I took to looking at the company in detail, wondering which of the white-bosomed women that swept by me might be Maude Baxter, or have a knowledge of her.

I had not yet the temerity to put the question, and hastened to get out of the press in the hall. I had no mind to prostrate myself before the governor, and so went by the reception-room, where I saw the round-shouldered and thin-legged octogenarian, dressed as King Charles the First, and unmasked, surrounded by a gay crowd, he cackling and trying to be young at a time when he should have been snugly in bed. As I reached the ballroom the last

clang from the band in the gilded balcony had just sounded the end of a dance, and the crowd of gypsies, cavaliers, knights, and squires, many now unmasked, were streaming through the wide doors leading into the garden.

The heat of the room and the rank, heavy odors of flowers and perfumes made even the large apartment stifling, and between my mask and the close cowl I wore I was at once streaming with perspiration. So to the garden I followed the flow of dancers, intending to get a breath of fresh air before opening my campaign.

But I soon forgot heat, risk, Maude Baxter, and all but one, for I had gone but half-way to the river to which the grounds extended, and had fallen free from most of the gathering, when I saw Dorothy Hilton.

It was like Fate.

She was unmasked and standing under a tree, her fair young face turned upward toward that of a tall man who was talking to her, and whose pale features and small, upturned mustache gave him the look of an aristocrat. He was dressed as might have been the Duke of Buckingham in his glory, and his conceit of self lay in every line of his countenance.

The festoon of half-burned-out lanterns in the branches above her illuminated the girl's face, and I could see that her expression had lost the gay vivacity of youth. It is hard to say why I gathered comfort from that; but, notwithstanding the slight droop to the corners of her sweet mouth and the touch of weariness about her dark eyes, she was exquisitely beautiful in her pale-pink gown, sowed with pink spangles.

A mask of the same color dangled from one hand; with the other she held up the long train of her gown. Her dark hair was piled high, as was the style; but she wore nothing in it, save one great rose, now drooping with the heat.

I paused, like a hound pointing its prey; but was too far to hear what the man was saying, and I was fairly concealed, having halted at a corner of the path where a tall syringa-bush sprang from the border, and for my life I do not think I could have moved or been moved by any danger at that moment, though this tension did not endure.

For as I watched the couple I felt that I had seen the man before, but the occasion of it came like an indefinable dream, and I could not place him. Should I walk forward and make myself known? In

my unreasoning state I might have obeyed the impulse only that an adventitious incident interposed and saved me.

As I stood there with my heart in my eyes, little regarding that which was going on elsewhere, a masker in the costume of a troubadour, his lute swinging from his shoulder by a broad ribbon, brushed by me, and going straight to the couple, doffed his feathered cap to the lady, then taking off his visard he spoke to the tall cavalier at her side. As he turned, my knees almost gave way beneath me, for I recognized Lieutenant Bull.

Now, though I had no reason to fear him, since he had met me face to face within a week and failed to know me, yet I did fear him. I take it that no man, be he what he may, can look upon a direct menace to his own life without fear; and I knew that Bull had mine at his command, were he but aware of it. I had not thought of the possibility of meeting him, and the shock of his appearance brought me to a sense of my position at that moment. It may be rightly inferred that I did not move.

Bull did not remain under the tree for long. Having accomplished what was evidently an errand, he laughed lightly, took Dorothy's hand and lifted her

fingers to his lips, bowed low, and came back toward me, readjusting his mask as he advanced.

I hated him well at that moment; not only because his presence in the city was a menace to me, but because of the man himself, he being a brute, and the familiar way in which he had saluted the lady.

As he came along rapidly and turned by the syringa-bush, he nearly ran into me; but I stepped aside, though not in time to prevent his bringing his lute against my elbow, the blow breaking the supporting ribbon and letting the instrument fall to the ground. He let out an impatient oath at the accident, and, stooping, picked up the useless thing; then took notice of me.

“A plague on monks!” he said in open irritation. “You act your part well, sir. Is your concealment behind a bush with the usual purpose of your order?”

I caught my breath sharply, and though disguised, would not play the part of a poltroon before this man.

“Which might be?” I returned.

“Eavesdropping,” he retorted.

“Sir Pickstring,” said I, not caring to have trouble with him, “were this any other occasion, I might take offense at your tone. My blessing on you.”

"You are like all of your brotherhood," he returned.

"In what respect?" I asked, suddenly losing all anxiety regarding my own safety, so far as he was concerned.

"Meek in the face of merited correction," he answered. "A monk, real or otherwise, has no power to bless or curse. He lacks in spirit."

"Are you seeking a difficulty, sir?" I asked, struggling with my temper.

"I do not run from it. Will you kindly uncover, Sir Monk?" At that he snatched off his own mask and showed his face, already red with anger. Bull was no coward.

"Pardon me, Sir Pickstring. This is a time of pleasure, and I have a vow. But if you will pass your hand down my gown, you will find evidence of a lack of meekness."

"Ah, then, there is a future for us," he returned, curling his thick lip. "My name is Bull, of His Majesty's service. I am to be found at Fraunce's."

"And mine is Baxter — with the world for a home. You will hear from me, Mr. Bull. But until I am ready for you, I beg you to leave me. This is no china-shop."

"You are a coward," he replied hotly.

I simply bowed. Had I said another word I would have been beyond my own control, and I had game afoot that made an open breach there and then a simple impossibility. He looked me over in contempt for an instant, then turned on his heel with a sneer and went toward the house.

Well rid of him on any terms, I gave my attention to the two under the tree. The man had resumed his mask, and Dorothy was replacing hers. I saw they were about to go, and, deeming no time like the present, I stepped from behind the bush, and with my heart now beating the devil's tattoo on my ribs, I advanced to them. As I came up I halted. "*Benedicite!*" I said. "Has my daughter a moment to give to her father confessor?" My voice was hoarse with sudden emotion.

"Pardon, sir friar," she returned kindly. "Have you not made a mistake? I have promised you no dance."

"Nay, but such a promise I crave," I said, with an attempt at lightness. I hoped to get her alone.

"You are too late, my friend," put in the cavalier. "The lady has promised the coming minuet to me."

I took no notice of him.

"If Mistress Hilton cannot give me the measure I would have, will she allow me one moment aside?"

I know I am asking much — perhaps too much — but I have a confidential communication to make to her.”

“And you know me, sir?” she asked.

“For years, *madame*.”

There might have been something in the sound of my voice that brought to her old memories, for her hand went to her heart with a sudden movement.

“Two minutes under yonder tree,” I pleaded, “or even one minute. It might mean much to you — and to another. If —”

“Nay, then,” put in her escort; “this is thoroughly irregular and even uncouth of you, sir, as you must be aware. You are a stranger, and —”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” I interrupted with a touch of asperity; “I am addressing myself to the lady.”

“And I believe annoying her.”

“It is for Miss Hilton to say, sir.”

“I think it must be with me that you will reckon,” was his haughty reply.

“And nothing loath,” I retorted, now getting hot at his interference and supercilious air. “Please, *madame*, for the sake of an old friend, one you once held in more than mere esteem.”



**SHE FAIRLY STAGGERED BACK, THE HALF-ADJUSTED MASK FALLING FROM
HER FACE.**

“A communication! And from an old friend? Please, sir, first tell me his name.”

Her words were sweet and soft, but now her agitation was apparent. What harm if I told?

“It is from Mr. Talbot Marcy.”

She fairly staggered back, the half-adjusted mask falling from her face, and I saw her eyes grown large. She recovered herself at once and was about to speak, but her escort interrupted her. And it was plain that he had not heard the name unmoved, for his air of languor dropped from him and his words came crisply.

“Come, sir, you are doing an unwarrantable thing, as I happen to be aware that the man you mention is not living.”

“How know you that?” I demanded.

“By good report though of an evil subject,” he answered confidently; “and I am in duty bound to put a stop to this matter, the lady being under my protection. If you have any communication, which I doubt, give it to Miss Hilton as a gentleman should, or leave us.”

“Will you kindly step aside, then?”

“If you will assure me of your character. Remove your mask.”

He took off his. I turned to the lady.

"Will Miss Hilton demand it?"

"It matters little. I demand it," he said, forcing himself on me. "I am here to protect her."

And he took a step forward.

"Stop!" said Dorothy, laying a hand on his arm. "I will go with him. Pardon me a moment. I will step to yon tree and hear him."

She made as if to go toward the towering sycamore that stood ten paces further toward the river, the garden extending almost to the water's edge, but her escort caught her by the arm. "No, by my faith!" he said, now aroused. "Not until he gives me his name and shows his face."

"Very good," I said. "*Madame*, I bow to circumstances. My message is to you because I was given to understand you were the ward of Talbot's father. It is that Talbot Marcy is alive. While in London years ago he was pressed into His Majesty's navy, and has been practically a prisoner ever since. There is one who, perchance, thinks him faithless. To her this may be a comfort. Do you know her?"

The girl did not answer. Her lips fell apart, her bosom heaved and her pale face turned white. Was this from guilt or surprise? God knew; I could not

tell. The man broke in with a ferocity which to me was then unaccountable.

"And who are you, sir? Where do you stay? Uncover, or, by Heaven, I'll tear your face clean!"

His attitude was belligerent. I stepped away from him and slid my hand into my gown.

"My name is Baxter, sir," I said. "I am in the city for but a few days, looking for my sister Maude."

"Damn you and your family affairs!" he vociferated. "Where can I find you?"

"At the King's Arms, Sir Cavalier," I answered, my temper at the breaking point. "If you will present yourself to-morrow I will promise to open your eyes on several matters."

"By the Lord, but I'll have them open to your identity now, you boor!" he said, and stepping forward he snatched at my mask.

I sprang back in time to avoid his hand, and then regardless of consequences, and with a flame before me, I struck him on the chest with a force that sent him staggering.

It was a long arm blow and he did not fall. In an instant both our swords were out, and in an instant more I would have been ruined, however the bout ended; but Dorothy flung herself between us.

She had just strength to speak, and with her eyes on me she gasped: "Stop — stop! For the love of —"

And then she toppled to the ground. I sprang toward her, forgetting my opponent; but he grasped me by the arm and pulled me back.

"See what you have done, you villain!" he almost shouted.

"It is on your head, then," I said. "She has but fainted. For her sake, I will forget your insult. Perhaps she may have a word to send to Marcy."

"Marcy may be doubly damned — and you shall answer for this. I will not forget you, sir. Tomorrow morning — Oh, Bull — Bull, come here!"

He had bent and was lifting the lifeless figure, keeping me off with one hand, and I was about to forcibly protest my claim, if not my right, when his call to Bull, and a sight of that officer's figure again on the path brought me to my senses. To stay where I was might be fatal for me, while in the face of things as they were I could do nothing for Dorothy, and so I took thought of my own necessities. Without another word, I slipped my drawn sword into its sheath and stepped into the dense shrubbery. There I stopped long enough to hear the voices of the two men and catch the name of Baxter, and yet long

enough to see Dorothy recover and get to her feet, looking round her wildly. What words passed among the three I know not; but finally the lady was led toward the house, and I turned and made my way from the grounds.

I had done a great night's work forsooth! I had seen my love and stunned her. I knew nothing of my own standing with her, and I had done nothing toward finding Maude Baxter. True it was that I might have remained at the ball and pushed inquiries, but now I had no stomach for it, and knew perfectly well that I could not tarry and expect to be unmolested by one or both of the men I had encountered, either of which had received an insult demanding an application of the code of the day.

CHAPTER XII

MUTTERING THUNDER

THOUGH I returned to the King's Arms, I had no thought nor desire to remain in my room. Sleep was out of the question; so, throwing my costume over the footboard of the bed, I went out again into the fresh night air.

I found that I had been at the ball for but little more than an hour; for, as I walked up Broadway, St. Paul's boomed out one o'clock. At the Fields, I was turned back by a sentry, and so wandered down by the waste of the burned district, where Trinity Church lay a mass of ruins.

The old moon was just rising, and the street was deserted at that hour; but, having much to think about and plenty to regret, I strolled along, deliberate enough in body though in a mental riot, my hands in my pockets, my sword swinging by my side.

It was scant comfort to me to realize that I was now known by three names: To Bull as both Quince and Baxter, to Dorothy's escort as Baxter, and to others, including Howe and my landlord, as Marcy.

Surely nothing but confusion, or worse, could come from this mess if I remained in New York ; but I now saw that I could remain but little longer ; both place and pace had grown too hot for me.

That the girl, with womanly intuition, had guessed at my identity, I was certain, and for that reason, more than any other, I had given my address. I felt positive that I would eventually hear from her, though to what effect I was in doubt, and the combination of desire and duty brought me to my wits' ends in trying to determine how I should act. Safety demanded flight ; but to a man with his liver of a proper color there are things having a stronger appeal than personal safety, unless the danger is imminent. But no immediate disaster threatened, and I was ready to fly at any moment. Much might yet happen in my favor, and thus far I had accomplished nothing for all my risk.

So, cogitating and thinking of the night's work, I had just reached the site of the old Coffee-House, now a heap of blackened timbers, and was well down toward Bowling Green, when I saw the figure of a man dart from the ruins within a rod of me.

Now, the burned district was not deserted, for all its desolation. Since the great fire of the year before, when something like a third of the city had been de-

stroyed, no attempt had been made to rebuild, or even clear the ruins; and now it was a fairly dangerous neighborhood, as the offscourings of the camp had taken possession of the whole area, and, utilizing old wall, beams, and sails, had established a colony of violence and filth which went by the name of "Canvas-town."

I instantly conceived that it was one of its desperate characters who had attacked me with a view to robbery and my sword was out in a jiffy; but, to my surprise, the fellow, instead of throwing himself on me, fell to his knees and called me by name.

Bending forward, I studied his blackened features, and under the grime and traces of suffering I recognized young Linton. His clothing was nondescript rags, and his whole appearance indicated extreme misery. I could only let go an exclamation.

"For Heaven's sake, give me food," he said in a voice scarcely above a whisper. "I am starving."

"What are you doing here?" I demanded, lifting him to his feet.

"Hiding. Help me again, Marcy. I am spent."

He looked it — spent in body and soul. I could not leave him to die, as it seemed likely he would; and at that hour every "public" was closed, save the larger hotels. The boy could hardly stand alone,

and the pathetic look in his great hunger-racked eyes might have softened a harder heart than mine. I could not resist his appeal, nor for a moment did I dream of deserting him. Food for the fainting lad must be obtained, and I saw that the only way to get it lay in taking him to my own quarters, though it was something of a risk to be seen with such a looking character.

I was not aware that I was then being weighed in the balance of Divine Justice; that had I shown the callousness to suffering in evidence before me, my days had been numbered within a few hours. To me, Linton was but a suffering fellow creature whom I happened to know, but in reality he was my guardian angel who had come to me disguised as a miserable and starving outcast.

I put my arm around his poor figure and fairly lifted him along the way, fortunately encountering no one. I got him into the King's Arms unseen, sneaking through the side door, and after arriving in my room, without stopping to question the lad I went below to the coffee-room, or bar, and managed to gather the remains of a late meal, which, together with a bottle of wine, I smuggled upstairs. Then I lighted a candle, and watched the boy eat, without inquiry, for I guessed at his story, and guessed

right. But he told me that which I had not guessed, but might have known.

“The *Dragon* lies in the river,” he said. “It is why I dared not venture from the ruins, for a dozen might recognize me.”

The *Dragon*! I might have known it from Bull’s presence at the ball, but so beset had I been that the schooner’s advent in the harbor seemed like a small matter in the face of greater threats. It did not disturb me to hear of her.

The thin yarn of the lad’s narrative was soon spun, and to this effect. Linton had gone from me in Flushing Bay, and got safely to Brookland, crossing the Sound River with a boat-load of wood, passing as a chopper. His desire had been to get to Jersey, where his home was, but the man he had counted on to help him, was dead; and, thus blocked, he had taken refuge in Canvastown, where he had been promptly robbed of both money and clothing, and was in a fair way of perishing from starvation, instead of the noose, when, while skulking near the ruined tavern, he had recognized me.

“And when I saw you alone at that time of night; when I had lost all hope, I knew God had sent you;” he said piously between his mouthfuls, the tears of weakness running down his hollow cheeks. It was

pitiful to see a human being so ravenous, and, on my faith as an honest gentleman, the water stood in my own eyes as I saw him eat.

"You will not set me adrift to-night?" he asked pleadingly, as he finished his last bite.

"Heaven forbid," I returned. "Here you will stay. To-morrow we will lay plans. Now sleep."

And he did, throwing himself on the floor, and at once falling into the profound slumber of exhaustion. I even slept myself, though not until I had determined to let one more day go by, and then, if no sign or word came from Dorothy, I would board the *Gloosecap*, and hoist sail for New Haven. There I would confess my failure to Tallmadge and enlist in the militia, taking Linton with me, if he would go, for I knew not the color of his politics, if he had any. He was but a boy of seventeen or eighteen, not built for hard usage, and had too little spirit, I thought, to be much of a man. Wherein I was in error, as it turned out that our meeting was far more than an act of grace for him. I certainly had no intention of deserting the boy in his extremity, yet to shelter him for even a day would be to increase my own risk were his presence in my room discovered by either the landlord or the maidservant. But this I would take a chance about, as I did about many matters,

and so, having come by a definite line of action I let myself slumber.

The following morning broke hot, the day bidding fair to be hotter, and it was late when I went out to buy food for the refugee, it being too risky an attempt to obtain it from the dining-room. I told Linton to make no sound if a knock came on the door, and so locked him in. I was gone mayhap an hour, taking time to do up the bundle of provisions that their nature might not be guessed, and had just gotten inside the entrance of the King's Arms, when I came upon mine host talking with a commonly dressed fellow in the hall.

"I tell ye there is none such here; nor has there been," the landlord was saying.

"Faith, then," said the other, looking at the paper he held, "the name an' direction be plain enough. The 'K' in 'King's Arms' I know, because it looks like a gibbet lacking a thief, while the 'x' in Baxter is the same as one end of a saw-horse. I conned the two words well."

"What is this?" said I, catching at the name of "Baxter."

"A letter for one I know not, sir," said my host. "I know of no Baxter, nor ever did."

"It is for me," I said. "I gave the name last

night. I was looking for a message. I should have told you."

The good-natured proprietor of the King's Arms smiled knowingly, putting his tongue into his cheek and closing one eye. "By my faith, what a thing youth is! Aye, the superscription is very like a lady's hand, now that I scan it close! Heaven bless me, but I, too, were young, one day!" He held the letter out to me as he spoke.

Had it come so soon? I snatched the paper from my landlord's hand, whereat he laughed outright, then I threw the bearer a shilling, and hurried up to my room. Locking the door behind me I tossed the bundle of provisions to Linton and told him to pitch in; then divesting myself of half my clothing, for I was already soaked with perspiration, I ripped open the letter.

I had no need to read it to know whom it was from; the writing on the wrapper was enough, and a sight of it set my pulses bounding. This was what met my eye:

Talbot:

I am sick since last night, body and soul. Your sister may not go to you, but you must come to her, finding the means. She asks — what do you wish of her?

She will be at the Apthorpe's on the Bloomingdale Road; but appear not at the house. You will find her in the orchard toward the river, where she will walk each day between the hours of eleven and noon.

Her heart is bursting with joy, fear, and a hope of deliverance. Change your place of residence at once.

Maude.

My first impression was not one of excessive joy, such as men know it. I stared at the paper while sparks danced before my eyes, for beside the encouragement it contained there was an astounding revelation. I fairly gasped in my amazement as I read the return to the test question I had not put as a test, and a flood of emotion shook me as I fathomed the fact that *Dorothy Hilton was Maude Baxter.*

I could hardly credit it. I had struck for one and gained two; and if ever a man let go a prayer of thankfulness, I did at that moment, and while yet too stunned to gather the portent of it all.

But my wits did not go all ways at once for long. I saw that Dorothy wanted me, and also, that she would protect me, as her warning clearly showed. Therefore she could not be indifferent. I read between the lines and marked the old sweetness, the old affection. She longing for deliverance! Deliverance from what? I would soon know. The way

was open; my mission would be accomplished. I would at once procure a horse from the livery of the house and start — and then my wits came to their normal working, stopping me short.

A pass! I could not stir without one; though in the face of this wonderful opening I would dare to go to Howe and ask for it. Aye, if all else failed I would run the lines and get to her afoot.

At that moment I was in the throes of unreasoning enthusiasm but was suddenly brought to level sanity by a knock on my chamber door.

Stooping for the letter, I thrust it into my pocket, and motioned Linton to the closet. He left the table and slipped like a shadow into concealment. I went to the door, expecting to see either the landlord or the chambermaid; but to my consternation there stood Lieutenant Bull in undress uniform, red-faced as usual, but otherwise as fresh as if just out of bed. Without waiting for an invitation, he stepped into the room.

I stood blinking at the man as if he were a ghost, and too utterly dumfounded to speak a word, though subconsciously connecting his presence with the warning I had but just received, and had a feeling of relief when I saw he was alone and not armed even with a cutlas. He did not appear to notice any

great embarrassment on my part as, drawing himself up and facing me, he said:

“This is Mr. Baxter, I believe.” Then he glanced about the room and continued:

“You are quite comfortable here. Ah! and breakfasting *al fresco*! Did you not expect me?”

His manner was light and insufferably impudent in his attempt to be debonair. How he had found me was plain. He had undoubtedly inquired below-stairs for one Baxter, and it came to me as being God’s mercy that the letter from Dorothy had arrived in time for the landlord to know the assumed name, else it had possibly come out that Talbot Marcy was within the house. Why he had come unannounced I could not tell, neither did it make a difference. His errand I guessed at, though I gave no hint of my surmise as I asked:

“Why should have I expected you, sir?”

“It is greatly to be regretted that you are as deficient in a knowledge of social refinements as you seem to be deficient in courage,” he returned carelessly, then he caught sight of the monk’s cassock and cowl that hung over the footboard of the bed where I had thrown it. “Ah!” he continued, pointing at it, “that was your shield last night, but it will not serve to-day.”

I stood and looked at him with a lack of common courtesy he evidently construed as fear, for he went on: "Do you also want ordinary politeness that you are dumb to a visitor? May I sit?" And without waiting for an answer he stepped over to the table, and took the chair but shortly vacated by Linton. By that time I had got my wits into line, and the use of my tongue.

"You might explicitly state the occasion of this intrusion, Mr. Bull," I said.

"I will," he returned, growing serious. "Something I might say regarding your outrageous treatment of a lady, but we will put that aside. I call in behalf of a friend whom you insulted last evening, and — by the way, have I not seen you before?"

He bent forward and peered at me. I made up my mind before the question was fairly out of his mouth. "I have had the questionable privilege of meeting you twice before, sir," I answered quite calmly, though my heart was bounding.

"Twice? Ah!"

"Once, last night, when I withheld from giving you merited punishment for your insolence; once, some days since, when, as a king's messenger, I rather lowered your colors from the deck of the sloop *Gloose-*

cap. This is the third time. Doubtless you are aware of the significance of a third time, sir."

"By my best bower — Quince!" he exclaimed, all the forced lightness dying from him, his face flushing. "And so you masked your name as well as yourself!"

"It was a *bal-masque*, Mr. Bull."

"Lieutenant Bull, sir."

"As you please. Neither title nor service is honored."

He leaned forward as if he would leap from his chair. "'Fore God, sir; I wish I were here on my own behalf!" he returned hotly, his face now aflame with anger. "I would have you out, or horsewhip you. Mine is of right the first chance."

"And who claims it?" I asked loftily.

"You know well enough. After insulting me like a boor, you abused a lady and struck the person I have consented to represent. I wish to bandy no words with you, Mr. Baxter — or Quince. I know nothing of your position, but will waive all that for both my friend and myself. Will you kindly give me the name of someone who will lower himself in your behalf and act as your second? After this affair I will have to do with you on my own account."

He spoke rapidly and forcibly. It was to be a

duel, then — or two of them; at least, such was intended by him, the first one to be with Dorothy's escort in order to wipe from his honor the stain of my blow. Who the man was, I had no idea, and, like a dolt, neglected to ask his name, preferring for obvious reasons to let Bull think I knew it. And really it mattered nothing, as a duel with anyone was out of my books at that time. Not that I feared either antagonist. As the challenged party, I would have the choice of weapons, and I have yet to see the one who can surpass my marksmanship with a well-bored and well-finished pistol. It was not the fear of meeting either on the field that made me indifferent regarding an engagement; it was because I expected to be far away the next day, and out of the toils. Situated as I was, I would have accepted a dozen cartels, and now I wanted to get on my way to Dorothy. If I made some answer and gave some name, I might hope to get rid of Bull and act in my own behalf. I thought rapidly before I replied:

“Not having many friends in the city, sir, I can only think of one whom you may approach; nor will you question his standing.”

“And he?” He was now leaning back in his chair.

“Sir John Dirck,” I said.

I thought he would go after that, but he only

looked at me stupidly for a moment; then he broke out in a voice that was shrill with anger, "Sir John Dirck! Are you playing with me, you coward? Or do you mean to pile on your insults by naming my principal?"

With that, he jumped to his feet.

CHAPTER XIII

LIGHTNING STRIKES

HAD the ceiling of my room fallen about my ears, I would not have been more astonished. Instantly I was aware of the horrible blunder I had made, and the strange light in which it placed me, and at the same time my brain cleared itself of one thing I had unconsciously puzzled over.

Sir John Dirck! The mystery of the familiarity of the cavalier's face dissolved as my memory fell back to three years before. I had only met him once, and then when in London, the night preceding the one on which I had been pressed. He had come to me after a dinner at the house of Lord Belfordshire, in which I dare say I made a fool of myself. I know that I resented an insult by my host, and know that Sir John Dirck came in behalf of the stripling of a noble family, and that with rather a high hand I had referred him to my father's agent. Of course the affair failed to come off because of my sudden disappearance, and I had doubtless been branded as a coward by the coterie in which I had been intro-

duced. That had always galled me, for a coward I am not, and now here was a fair chance for me to show my mettle, only the fates were against it.

Instead of either trying to explain or treating the matter as a grim joke, I stood staring at Bull, while the past rushed over me. How could I draw from this coil? I was in a decided dilemma, and was on the point of defying circumstances and ordering the officer from my room, for my restraint had reached its limit, when again a knock came at the door.

I was in a pace of it, and, glad enough of a momentary diversion, I stepped to it and threw it open; but, instead of one of the household, a soldier stood at attention in the hallway. I recognized him instantly. It was the sergeant under whose escort I had first gone to Isaac Foster's. He knew me, and at sight of me threw up his hand in a respectful salute, and said in a loud and formal tone:

"Mr. Talbot Marcy. His Excellency General Howe requests ye to call at headquarters at once."

"How the devil did you know I was here?" I burst out, now past restraint.

"Inquired aboard the sloop, sir."

"Then tell General Howe I will be with him in an hour. Go."

He saluted again, turned on his heel, and went

down the hall. I quickly closed the door and locked it, putting the key in my pocket; and when I turned on Bull, I knew my fat was in the fire and in flames.

For the expression of the man's face had changed as rapidly as if he had put on or taken off a mask. Instead of anger alone, there was both astonishment and malicious triumph, and he looked as if awakened suddenly from a dream as he bared his teeth and pointed at me.

"Talbot Marcy! By Heaven, I know you now! That gave the answer to my puzzle! You are the Hawk! I thought you dead until this minute! How comes it that you are outside of hell where you belong?"

A great crisis will often quiet a man when a slight one throws him into a fever. At that moment I was perfectly well aware of the uselessness of attempted concealment so far as I was personally concerned, and was equally aware that the issue between Bull and myself must be fought out there and then. But that necessity did not faze me; I think it rather steadied me. I know that when I spoke I appeared calm enough, and had the mental poise to wonder at it.

"Lieutenant Bull," said I, casting round for some weapon and seeing only my sword standing near the head of the bed, "through no astuteness of your

own, you have managed to put me in a tight position. I am Talbot Marcy. That I am not dead you will find more than apparent. What do you purpose doing?"

"Doing? I will put you where you belong, you deserter," he snarled in his rage. "You will soon be where Dirck and I will be quits with you. I believe you to be a cursed rebel spy."

"You are perfectly right in effect," I returned without wasting force in violence of language; "and I have the honor to state that I have been fairly successful at it, though driven to it through your brutality."

"You dog!" he blurted out.

"Pardon me, and listen," I interrupted. "This is no time for euphemisms. I chastized you on board the *Dragon*, escaped by swimming, and deceived you under your nose at a later day. I appropriated the name of Quince, and held his pass because I had captured the sloop from him and delivered him to the Connecticut authorities together with a copy of Howe's despatches from Sag Harbor, and if by this time the king's storehouses there have not gone up in smoke, it is through no fault of mine. Then I came here on business — the business of serving my country as well as myself. You know much of the

rest. I went to the governor's ball without invitation, and my purpose there was accomplished; I have made myself known to Miss Hilton, to whom I have been betrothed for several years; I have come into communication with a spy who stands high in favor with your authorities; I have hoodwinked Howe into a belief in me, as you may judge by the order just received, and I shall go to him when I have finished with you. These things I have done, but there remains much to do, one of which, sir, I fancy will include yourself."

I can never forget the changes that passed over Bull's face as he listened to this open confession. His lips trembled and he became fairly apoplectic. When I ceased speaking his chest was heaving.

"You monstrous — you unparalleled villain!" he exclaimed thickly.

"Moreover, though you think I am at your mercy, it is you who are at mine, and under the circumstance, that is but scant. You called me a hawk; such is my nature now, and did you ever know a hawk to be meek? I say this because it must be clear to you that I do not mean to let you leave this room alive, after what I have told you."

I timed my words to suit my action, and as I finished speaking I leaped for my sword. But I had

only seized it and drawn the blade, intending to cut the man down, there being no other way out of it, when he coolly picked up Quince's pistol which lay on the table at his hand. Cocking it, he leveled it full at me.

I had forgotten the pistol. The barrel had lately galled me in the wearing, and I had laid it aside the day before. I knew the weapon was loaded and fully primed, and he now had the advantage of me, in that the bed stood between us, and protected him against sudden assault. I expected to hear the report, and have that end all; but, instead of pulling the trigger, he held me under the scowling ring of the muzzle, and spoke with a sudden and easy insolence that told me he had for some time known the handiness of the firearm.

"I think, sir, I will leave this room alive, and so will you, unless you drive me to the necessity of killing you offhand. I am obliged to you for this list of your damnable villainies. You have spun your yarn and come to the end of it, you scoundrel; but before I take you hence, I, too, have a word it may please you to hear. Drop that rapier, sir, and throw me the key to the door."

I did not move. I could not.

To me the world seemed coming to an end. There

flashed through my brain the thought of Dorothy and her waiting in the orchard; the awful shock of the news when she should receive it. I thought of Dirck comforting her, and of Carey Drummond gloating over my taking off. It was bitter — it was maddening to have this contretemps come on the eve of my success, and this bitterness was not in the least mitigated by the sight of the triumphant face of the beast intrenched behind the bed and out of my reach.

I was helpless — absolutely helpless. I could not have obeyed Bull at that moment, even had I willed. I was temporarily paralyzed by shock, and as if reading and enjoying my mental perturbation, the officer stood looking at me with something like scorn curling his lip.

It seemed for years that we stood facing each other (though the time was probably compassed by seconds) — I, as rigid as a statue; he, waiting for me to obey his last command; and it was then, when the last spark of hope appeared to be extinguished, that it sprang into full flame.

In the rush of matters, from the moment my tormentor appeared in the room until the present instant, I had completely forgotten the existence of Linton; but now, as I stood at the mercy of my opponent,

powerless to either speak or move, I saw the closet-door behind him noiselessly open until the boy's face appeared.

It was the incarnation of venomous hatred. His thin nether lip was caught between his teeth and his blue eyes were blazing, but before I had more than a glimpse of him, he threw the door wide, leaped out, and, swinging aloft the stick of heavy firewood in his hand, brought it down on the bared head of the unsuspecting officer.

Under the blow the man's expression suddenly changed to something like astonishment, his eyes snapped, his jaw dropped, his knees bent, and he went to the floor without a sound save the thud of his body.

CHAPTER XIV

AN OPENING

THE fall of Lieutenant Bull unlocked my set muscles and permitted me to act; but so complete was my revulsion of feeling I was far from then comprehending what the blow had entailed. Linton stood rigid over the prostrate figure as if dazed by the success of his attack.

"You have killed him!" I cried, fairly leaping to his side.

"Then, Heaven be thanked!" he returned without emotion. "I am quits with him at last."

He lifted his head and looked at me.

"You think it a foul blow, Marcy! An' but for you I would be lying dead this minute! Three times have you saved me, and now the Almighty put this man under my hand that I might save you in turn! How else could Bull have been rendered harmless? and what chance had either of us with him alive? You were lost, and within an hour I would have been found and we would both have hanged together."

The undoubted truth of his last remark brought

forcibly to me the fact that unless some immediate action was taken the danger would be hardly less than it had been two minutes before. I bent to the body of Bull and turned him over. The man was not yet dead. Whether the thickness of his skull, assisted by the thickness of his hair, had saved his head from having been split by the ferocity of the blow, I cannot say; but alive he assuredly was.

A light froth lay on his lips; his eyes were but half closed and he looked like a corpse; but life showed in the stertorous sound following each heave of his chest. He was absolutely unconscious, and I doubted his recovering from the fearful concussion.

“What’s to be done now?” asked Linton. “I leave it to your head to find the way out.”

“Done!” I cried, jumping to my feet, and with a sudden conviction of the value of each minute. “There is enough that has got to be done — else you struck to no purpose. You heard the command from Howe?”

“Yes.”

“I must obey the call, else there will be a file of soldiers after me to know the reason of it. Linton, I meant to kill this man myself, though not with a blow from behind. Then my way would be open.

It is as open now. I may save us both, but there is work I must do that you wot not of."

"I will engage that Bull does not interfere," he returned, and I saw his former ferocity leap to his eyes.

"There is no need of striking him again," I said. "Drag him to the closet; then stay here in hiding until I come back. Art afraid?"

"Not of him. An you think I regret what I have done you mistake. It comes to me that a pass or something of value to us might be found on him."

I had not thought of it, but grasped the idea and at once we went through the pockets of the unconscious man. Little was found.

There was some money, which I would not touch, and some letters, each of the latter being from a separate lady. I did not read them all, but only enough to know my fallen enemy was a gallant, like most of his kidney. A pass I did come upon, but it appeared of little use to me in that it gave directions to allow Lieutenant Preston Bull, of H. M. schooner *Dragon*, to pass through the lower lines in either direction. It was signed by Howe, but as the paper was personal, its possession might damn me if I attempted to use it, and I had hopes of obtaining a pass in a way less grim.

After satisfying myself that I could gain nothing from Bull's effects we got the officer into the closet, and glad I was to have the breathing corpse from my sight. Then I dressed, and as I hurried at it St. Paul's struck the half hour after nine, and realizing all there was to be done I was in something nigh a frenzy.

My plan, perfectly comprehensive, and made as I got into my clothes, was this: I would go to Howe and take his instructions, pretending to accept whatever errand he had planned, even to an attempt at assassinating Washington. In all likelihood I would be given a pass through the lower lines. Then I would procure a horse and post in haste to Dorothy, and if matters went smoothly I might arrive before she left the orchard at noon. If late I would even dare going to the Apthorpe mansion, demand to see her, and take the risk that might ensue. My wits had served me in a harder case.

After that all would be plain sailing. At night I would go aboard the sloop, smuggling Linton along, and then lay a course for a land where each breath I drew threatened not to be my last.

The plan was a rosy one albeit it depended upon several matters over which I could have no control, and it did not provide for unforeseen contingencies;

but in my experience never did hope or fear turn out as expected, though a strong will and the goodness of Providence may bring about a final proper ending.

Telling Linton I hoped to be back early in the afternoon, I left him in charge of his victim, and with as jaunty an air of carelessness as I could command, and with my sword on, I walked down-stairs, after locking my chamber door. At the lad's request I left the pistol with him that he might have a weapon more potent than a stick of firewood. I now had little doubt of his spirit.

As I reached the street I saw the landlord of the King's Arms standing before the door patting the neck of a charger belonging to some dragoon officer, the animal being hitched to the horse-rail. Not to create the idea that I was hurried I passed a light remark to mine host, at which he said, indicating the horse, "'Tis a fine beast, sir, the finest I have marked this many a day. Is your friend about to come out?"

"No," I returned, instantly conceiving that this was the animal on which Bull had arrived, also noting the gay military trappings that showed the mount had been borrowed.

"And by the by," I continued. "He has an aching head since last night's dissipation. He is lying

on my bed. You will see that the chambermaid does not go to my room and disturb him. Allow no one up till I come back."

"I will look to it," he returned, mighty civil. "I beg your honor's pardon, sir. I heard the order from his excellency, being on the landing at the time. I was unaware of your quality before, sir. Mayhap a better room might suit your honor."

"The one I have answers every purpose," I returned; and so left him, he taking off his hat to me.

But once round the corner I hurried at a swift pace and ere long was announced at headquarters. And there I met with my first setback, and one which appeared to render all my plan abortive.

As I was ushered into the office of General Howe, besides his aide there were with him two men in full uniform, and it was with consternation that I recognized one as the captain of the *Dragon*. That he would know me by sight was well-nigh impossible, but that he might connect the name of Marcy with the desperate deserter who had mutinied, knocked down his executive and then jumped into the sea, was very probable. However, he hardly glanced at me, but rising, turned to the stranger and said:

"Admiral, if you will pardon me I will take my leave. Bull promised to meet me at Fraunce's at

ten. He had a little affair on hand, I believe, but I wish to give him instructions before I sail."

"And when will you get off?" asked the other, whom I knew must be Admiral Howe, the general's brother.

"On top o' the flood to-night, sir. I shall make one tour of the island, and hope to join the fleet off the capes within three weeks."

"'S life, captain!" exclaimed the admiral. "There is no such hurry. You had better cruise round Sag Harbor for a time. There's a mort of stores in the place and I have misgivings of their being safe in a port so open to attack."

"Nonsense, William!" put in the general. "I have a hundred men there, and what force could be brought against them while we hold Long Island? Let not Sag Harbor interfere with your plans."

So Captain Blundel withdrew with no more discussion, but with a deal of formality. He did not deign to look at me as he passed out, and I breathed the freer for it. When he had gone General Howe turned to me where I was standing in an attitude of respectful attention.

"You are prompt, Marcy, but I understand you have not acted on my suggestion and taken quarters ashore."

"Yes, your excellency, I have," I replied. "I sent word to headquarters by my man. The villain has evidently neglected his errand." I concluded the lie with all the glibness of truth.

"So?" said Howe. "Then he deserves a lashing; but it matters little since no time was wasted in your coming. This is the man, William," he continued, speaking to his brother and waving his fat hand toward me. "Marcy, I am not at present going to send you on the errand I had in mind when I saw you, but the admiral wishes to make use of you, and I have gone so far as to recommend you to him. I trust and believe you will acquit yourself. I leave him to you, William."

With this he got heavily to his feet, and after a word with his aide, who sat at the table across the room, left the apartment.

Admiral Howe was a quicker, snappier man than his sluggish brother. His fine face gave token of more intelligence, he was without vacillation, and his words were sharp and clear. Within ten minutes he had told me what he wished, which was that I proceed at once to the Elk River in Maryland, and deliver the letter he held in his hand. In the light of subsequent history I now know that the matter was

of mighty importance and believe that his placing his confidence in me delayed the fall of Philadelphia for several weeks, but then I listened to his instructions with my brain more busy on my own affairs than on his.

Time was flying. Bull would be missed and this mission would not take me beyond the line to the north. I knew I had gotten into a tight place when the admiral concluded:

“A barge will be waiting you at the Whitehall at three this afternoon, sir. It will take you to Staten Island, whence you will proceed to Elk River without delay, and return quickly, bearing an answer to this, which you will deliver to General Howe. He will reward you. There will be little or no risk, yet your promptness will raise you in my esteem, sir. You will want money. Here it is.”

He took from the desk two rouleaus of coin and handed them to me, together with the letter.

Here was a fix; and I felt the coils that had loosened tightening around me again. To obey the order without making a strike to carry out my plans might mean safety for me, but it would probably mean certain death for Linton, captivity for Rance, and might affect Dorothy unfavorably. In her let-

ter she had prayed for deliverance. What could she mean? I had still time enough to find out, but what would time be without means?

"Admiral," said I, "I have an important matter demanding attention. It will take me beyond the lower lines. I lack a pass. With one I can finish the business and be at the barge on the hour."

"I have provided for your transmission from Staten Island to Jersey," he returned rather brusquely. "With the lines here I have nothing to do. You will have to see my brother."

He waved me away with his lace-cuffed hand and stood up, thereby indicating that the interview had terminated; then with a slight bow to Danby, who rose to his feet, he too left the room. I was at my wits' end, and turned to the aide.

"When will his excellency be back?" I asked.

"I am afraid, not before dinner," was the reply that sent my heart to my boots. "He has an engagement this morning."

"And you could not help me to a pass?"

"Good Lord, no. Nor would I advise you to risk delay. You are in a fair way of making a name for yourself, sir."

I made no answer to this, but left the room.

CHAPTER XV

ALIAS BULL

WHEN I reached the street I stood looking up and down without knowing which way to go. It was quiet enough under the hot sun, but not soothing. My cheeks burned from repressed excitement.

Must I go without seeing Dorothy? I knew then how I yearned for her, and that my passion for her had been the mainspring of my daring. Must I resign my chances of content? throw aside the commission promised by Tallmadge? place Linton, who had saved me, in worse than jeopardy? and abandon Rance, who depended on me as does a child on a parent? Should I do these things to save my own skin? I was in a mighty dilemma, and one threatening more than myself; but even while in the depths of it I suddenly conceived of a possible way to accomplish my purpose.

It was a tremendous conceit and more tremendous in its execution, but being in desperate straits I

would act as befitted a desperate man. If I were successful I would see Dorothy within three hours, and by dark, for I would not dare attempt it before, I would board the *Gloosecap* with Linton and sail away. The great question in my mind was: how long would the barge wait for me at Whitehall? and how soon after I failed to appear would search be made for me? I could not even conjecture an answer to either question. I saw my plain duty, and placed myself in the hands of the Almighty as I determined to work it out though it cost me my life.

Back to the King's Arms I hurried, nervously fearful of finding the first step of my new plan blocked, as had been the case with the old. I feared, though without reason, that Bull and Linton had been discovered, but all appeared peaceful as I rounded the corner that brought me in sight of the hostelry. The charger was still hitched to the horse-rail, stamping with impatience and nagging at the early flies, but all else was quiet within and without. I met no one as I fairly bounded up the stairs.

As I unlocked the door and threw it open I was not surprised to see Linton standing in the middle of the floor covering me with his pistol. His face bore the hard wildness of a hunted animal, but as he

recognized me he lowered the weapon and almost smiled as he said:

“Faith, I was not looking for you! I thought my time had come at last! You are back early!”

“How is he?” I demanded.

“The same, though breathing with less noise. No one has been here.”

“Thank Heaven for that! I am in the devil of a quandary, and you on the lee-shore of trouble, my lad. I must have Bull out, take his clothes and pass for him. ’Tis our only chance; moreover, ’twere inhuman to leave him cramped in a hot closet when there is no need! Help me undress him and get him in bed. Almighty powers! There it strikes half after ten! I have no time to explain. You must get from here at once. Try for the sloop, if you have the spirit for it. Tell Rance I sent you, and have him ready to sail when I arrive. There must be quick work. Lad, you and I be on the fine edge dividing life and death. Will you risk doing all?”

“’Tis less risk than staying here and hanging outright,” he said quietly.

“Aye, and in your rags you will not be known. Come — now for Bull.”

How we got the clothes from the unconscious man, and him into bed, I can hardly tell, details jumbling

into a whole as I look back at it. I know the bell on St. Paul's boomed out eleven as I buckled my rapier about my waist, for Bull had come with no side arms, and then I took one look at the man, who was plainly dying, though he might last several hours.

Taking Admiral Howe's letter, the gold he had given me, together with my own money and papers, and the pass in the name of Bull, I wrung the boy by the hand and marched out, to all appearances an officer in the fatigue uniform of His Majesty's navy.

Providence had cleared the stairs and doorway, and the sun-swept porch was no place for loiterers. Unhitching the pawing charger, I got to the saddle with as much haste as I dared show, and turned up toward Broadway. I was now embarked, and I had staked my life on the love and faith of Dorothy Hilton. So far, so good, I thought, and may God in his mercy keep my wits clear.

Now, as I have said, the lower defenses through which I had to make my way extended entirely across the island¹ and there were but two roads piercing them. One was the great highway of Bowery Lane which passed the lines just beyond the Bull's Head

¹ They ran on a general line with the present Grand Street.

Tavern ¹ and debouched into the postroad above the city, where, in something like a mile, it was joined by the Bloomingdale Road.

The other was hardly more than a wide lane that went through the earthworks near the Hudson River, and was used for bringing in supplies from the farms on the west of the island. The former was the great artery for travel, but it took little thought for me to determine that there would be many there who would be likely to know Bull by sight.

Therefore, I dared not attempt it, though it were the shorter route to the Apthorpe mansion. Without an instant's delay, I decided for the farther but less risky passage.

Riding slowly up Broadway to the fields, I passed several dragoons and mounted officers; but, being in a navy uniform, there was no recognition expected, though I saw several glances at the military trappings of my horse. Flinging a careless but courteous salute to the officers, I rode on to where Broadway diminished to a mere path and terminated in a pair of bars.

These I let down and put up behind me, and found myself in Lispenard's Meadows, with the stream

¹ The Bull's Head Tavern was on the site of the old Bowery Theatre.

draining the Collect Pond running through its center. In those days it was an extensive sweep of swamp and grassland over which a few trees and clumps of bushes were scattered, a breeding-place for ague and yellow fever, and a fair resort for duelists, though the old and deserted ship-yard had grown in favor with the latter gentry. The few cattle belonging to the British commissary wandered over the field, but their guard, if there was one, was not in sight.

I rode on slowly but openly. By any one seeing me, it might be surmised that I was on my way by short cut to one of the redoubts beyond the marshy plain; but I know not if I was marked at all. I picked my way through a bog, leaped my good horse across the narrow stream, and to the north of the field struck the rough road running east and west. Here I expected delay, but found none, for the path was deserted. Going west, still at an easy pace, I came to where the way turned north to go through the works, and was there halted by a sentry. It was a crucial moment that, when I tendered Bull's pass to the officer of the guard who was at once summoned, but suspicion did not lurk in him. I was questioned, and had my answers on my tongue's end, explaining that I had business of a delicate nature to

be transacted at a farmhouse in Greenwich, and the officer catching at a romance, as I hoped he would, my choice of route was not remarked upon, and, after congratulating me on the value and appearance of my horse, he allowed me to proceed.

Once free of the works, and out of sight of them, I put figurative spurs to my animal, for of real spurs I lacked; but he hardly needed urging; like the wind he went, and as lightly as the wind my spirits rose at the smooth success of my venture. Or was it that alone? Can any lover ride to his heart's ease and not feel his pulses leap?

Within a mile of Greenwich a path leaves the highway and joins the Bloomingdale Road almost at right angles; and taking it, I was soon upon the thoroughfare that led to the Apthorpe mansion.

Now, there were two things I could do well, though I state this in all modesty; one was to shoot a pistol, the other to ride a horse, and riding had been taught me, my lessons beginning as soon as my little legs could span a pigskin. The shooting eye was the gift of Nature. And now, here I was astride a noble animal on a fair road, and the way I burned the latter made me sure I would be in time for my tryst. How I blessed Bull for his coming, and his taste in horseflesh! How I considered that that which first

appears as evil is often good. The sun scorched, but I did not feel it; the joy of speed got into my blood and I urged the splendid animal under me past all necessity, the rhythm of flying hoof-beats sounding like music, the air humming in my ears as we rushed through it. The fine scent of the open country came to my nostrils with the tang and flavor of wine; the beauty of the land was like a cool draught to a thirsty mortal, and though I went over the road like a meteor I saw every detail, from the dust-covered herbage by the way to the farthest farmhouse nestling among the trees, which latter were to fall during the coming winter, under the ruthless ax of the invader.

I will never forget that hour. I was on the apex of exaltation — a spiritual height based on what had passed and on hopes of what was at hand. I became frenzied with the delight of rapid movement and once so far forgot myself as to rise in my stirrups and let out a whoop in the glory of my excess of animal spirits; and that, too, when I knew I was yet compassed by danger and would return to perilous territory ere the sun went down.

It was a breakneck ride. My heart leaps now as I think of it, and I know that age — that curse of humanity — is of the body and not of the spirit.

Though the heat of the early morning had been like that of midsummer, I now saw its unseasonableness was to result in a tempest. For as I drew near to my journey's end, I noticed the black masses of cloud that had piled up from the west, and even above the hoof-beats on the road I caught the sullen rumble of distant thunder. Great cream-colored heads of clouds, their lower bodies of a deep blue-blackness, were rising over the Jersey hills, and as I looked I saw a flash lace the dark background. The breeze which had erstwhile piped gayly, fell to a flat calm. Not a leaf was moving, and save for my horse and self who were rushing onward, the world seemed to be holding its breath. There was no mistaking the portent.

I wondered if Dorothy had marked the coming tempest, and returned to the house. Surely she looked for me and would remain out as long as possible. I urged my foaming horse to greater speed that I might catch her before she went.

There was no mistaking the Apthorpe mansion. Years before, when a lad, I had visited there with my father, and at other times since I had passed it, but never had I dreamed of approaching it in this manner. It lay but a little back from the road, standing white and stately among the many trees

surrounding it. I remembered the parterre of gorgeous flowers, the smooth lawn, the trimly graveled drive to the high-arched doorway. But flowers and drive and door were not for me.

I drew rein when I came to the barns, somewhat down the road; for, branching from the great thoroughfare, there was a lane going toward the river, and I knew that it must give me access to a point near the orchard. At that moment there was not a soul in sight, so I took to the lane, which was well away from vision from the house, unless one was on watch near the great iron gates. The lane took me through a small grove of pines, and as I emerged from this, my eyes alert, I saw the orchard. It was a mass of bloom.

Dropping from my horse, I tied the animal under a tree, that he might have some shelter from the impending shower, and, climbing the rail fence, hurried through the arches of nodding plumes of pink. My heart was beating fast again. A long rifle-shot away I could see the red chimneys of the mansion, but that was all; the orchard was safe from casual observation from the house, and I saw the girl's wisdom in choosing it for a rendezvous, though the place was perilous for such as I.

And Dorothy was there. Moreover, I knew when

I saw her that all was well, that I would need no presumption in approaching her. Something in her attitude told the story as clearly as words would have done. She stood under a cloud of falling pink, the blossoms shedding their petals over her, for a gust from the coming tempest swept through the trees as I caught sight of her. But the pink of the flowers was less delicate than that of her cheeks as she saw me.

The unopened book she held dropped to the ground as she stretched out both hands, just as a child might have done to one long loved and long absent, her eyes like stars, and like the fabled Nymph of Spring, she stood still and waited for the coming of her lover.

There was no greeting in words, no shallow lip-service, no tentative approach. God alone knew my rapture as I took her in my arms, my heart too full for speaking; and she submitted as a maiden should, letting me rain kisses upon her, only laughing softly in the excess of her own happiness and the vehemence of my passion.

Even love cannot hold itself forever at such a height as I attained. I could hardly let her go from me, but she had more sense than I at that moment. Finally she drew gently from me, and

looked at me in wonder; then her beautiful face grew serious.

“Talbot, Heaven knows what this means to me; Heaven knows how I have mourned for you — and how I have hoped and prayed and feared. I might remain here and be happy, were things different. But I will be missed ere long, and we have much to say to each other.”

“I know not how I can find time to say anything but that I love you,” I answered, my hunger for her unappeased. “I have been starving. Were I to die for this now, I were well paid ere I fell.”

“Speak not of death,” she said; “it is none too far, and you are not safe from it even now.”

“I have crossed swords with it for a week or more, and bested it, so far,” said I. “I have been in hell for three years, Dorothy, and have just escaped to Heaven. Oh, my love — my love —”

She stopped me with her soft finger on my lip.

“I pray you say that when I have been ten years your wife. See! It will soon pour. We cannot stay here. There is a little building beyond. There I will tell you what I can; and then, Talbot, you must go — ah! you must leave me. You are in great danger.”

“I would brave a greater for less reward. Ten years, Dorothy —”

But she would not listen.

“Come,” she said, and ran ahead of me just as a flash of lightning tore the clouds and a few great drops fell, striking the leaves like buckshot.

CHAPTER XVI

A CRISIS

JUST as the thunder crashed we entered the little outbuilding, which was not so little, after all. It had been built both for utility and for pleasure, being half tool-house, half summer-house.

The rear was partitioned off by gayly painted boards, its door now closed; but the room we entered was only made of trellis-work thick with the purple of clustered wistaria. It made a verdure-walled apartment of considerable size.

The floor was well laid, a few light chairs were about, and the center held a large table. On a summer day it would make a fair spot in which to dine without convention, the lovely orchard spreading in green aisles in every direction.

We reached the place none too soon, for the rain poured upon our shelter the instant after we entered it.

There, realizing the advantage of place and demands of time, we two sat down by the table, the girl close at my side, and I, with my arm around her,

told her my story, beginning at the time I was pressed into the navy, on through my striking Bull and escaping from the *Dragon*, with my subsequent adventures. I had told it twice before, once to Tallmadge and once to Isaac Foster, but never with the eloquence I then commanded. It was a long recital, for I left off none of my acts, neither what had been my motive, my hopes, my fears.

Dorothy listened in wonder, sometimes paling, and at other times turning red in her excitement.

“And this for me, to repay for the doubts I dared allow possess me!” she exclaimed, the tears rushing to her beautiful eyes. “I can never tell you what I have suffered — what I am yet likely to suffer.”

“For what?” I asked.

“I am here a guest, and in a false position. I have come to revolt at it: this taking advantage of the confidence of unsuspecting friends — if they be real friends. I am being constantly importuned. I would be free — free of the eternal deception. I can be of little further use. I live a lie. For my purpose, I have allowed encouragement to the man —”

She hesitated.

“To Sir John Dirck?”

She bowed her head.

"He wants me; aye, even demands me. I respect him as a brave and honest gentleman, though a rabid enemy to the cause I love, and with none too little self-esteem."

"I neither wonder at nor blame him for his passion," I said. "It was he who bore the Honorable Howard's challenge to me, and he was with the party when I left the house of Lady Brunswick the night I was captured. And Bull told me I had been marked for the outrage. 'Fore God, if I but thought Dirck had a hand in it! Where is he now?"

"I hardly think that of him," said Dorothy, in her sweet charity; "but he is even at the house and —"

"At the house yonder?" I jumped to my feet.

"Do not worry; he never follows me here. He escorted us home this morning. We — Mistress Apthorpe and I — stayed the balance of the night at Fraunce's, and though my heart was breaking with anxiety for you, I wore my mask. Oh, I am so tired of it! It was from there I sent you the message. I knew you would be challenged. I heard Sir John tell Bull to bear your answer here."

"And Bull will never come."

"Ah, it is terrible!" she returned with a shudder. "I would that this war might end — or I might

find a haven elsewhere. Maude Baxter is no longer of use. She is aweary — aweary.”

“And you have learned nothing lately?”

“Yes, something, but not in detail. I had this for you in case our time had been too short to talk.”

She drew from her bosom a folded paper and handed it to me.

“It is that Howe contemplates a descent on Philadelphia within a month. Washington should be warned.”

“And he shall be,” said I. “By Heaven, I think my mission for Howe has to do with it!”

I took out my papers. Without a second of hesitation, I tore open the letter Admiral Howe had given to me that morning, and, spreading it between us, we read it. My surmise had been correct. The paper confirmed Dorothy’s statement and was, in effect, that, as the rebels had blocked the Delaware, the British army would proceed to the Elk River as soon as possible, there landing and making their way to the Colonial capital, the move probably flanking Washington’s entire army. Once in possession of the city, they might open the river at their leisure, and have a clear line for supplies by water.

The letter was addressed to one apparently a private citizen; but it asked for a return in the shape of

a map of the roads leading north, together with all streams and hills, the depth of water in the harbor, and the marking of shoals.

As I finished reading, I determined that Washington should have the plan that he might knock it in the head; and then, the papers being out, I showed to Dorothy the letter Carey Drummond had written to Dirck.

She read it, her eyes growing bright as she conned the damning evidence of the perfidy of my cousin.

"So they disposed of us both between them!" she said, flashing red as she laid the paper among the rest on the table.

By this, I had been there for more than an hour. The rain had ceased falling and the tempest had passed, the thunder now rolling in the distance; but the wind, which was rising, shook down showers of water from the dripping trees.

I knew it was time to be gone, and Dorothy was tearfully urging my going, though there could be no date for our future meeting.

We had risen, and I was clasping her again in my arms; kissing her hair, her forehead, her lips, almost in the frenzy of despair, when with a sudden exclamation of terror she started from me and pointed through the trellis.

“Listen! Someone is coming! You cannot get out unseen! Oh, what will we do?”

I released the maiden and swung around. The clusters of wistaria hung thick, and through the purple curtain it was impossible to see whether the approaching person was man or maid, though, whoever it was, it would not do for me to be found there.

Even as I looked, or tried to, I could hear a foot-fall on the wet turf; and with a glance at the papers scattered over the table, I motioned Dorothy to collect them, then quietly and quickly stepped to the door of the tool-room and opened it. As I did so, I was met by a gust of air from the window beyond — a gust the force of which sent the papers on the table flying to the floor; but I slid myself into the little room, and closed the door behind me.

And even then I might command a view of the entire outside apartment, for the boards of the tool-room were by no means tightly fitting. My eye had been laid to an opening for no more than ten seconds, when a man turned the corner of the building and entered the room.

My heart stood still an instant; for, instead of the gardener or some maid sent with wraps to look for my lady, I beheld the tall figure of Sir John Dirck. He was in full uniform, even to his sword, and his

plumed, tri-cornered hat and the shoulders of his scarlet coat showed the wetting he had received from the dripping trees.

As he caught sight of the girl alone, his face took on a look of perplexity. She had gathered most of the papers from the floor to which they had flown; but when she saw Dirck she started back in consternation, and for a moment I thought she had betrayed us both.

“What! Alone, Miss Dorothy!” he exclaimed, removing his hat and advancing to the table. “I thought to find Bull here!”

“No; he is not here. I have not seen him,” returned the girl, clutching to her bosom the papers she held.

“No? Yet I saw him turn into the lane an hour since — just before the shower. I was aware you were in the orchard, and would have joined you long ago but that I was watching for him to come up the road. I surmised you had both taken shelter here. His horse stands drenched by the fence yonder. And you have not seen him?”

“No.”

“Strange! And I was to meet him here on a matter — you know for what.”

Perhaps to hide her confusion, Dorothy stooped

for a paper lying before her; and Dirck, seeing two others on the floor, with the instinct of a gentleman, bent over them. The first he picked up was the girl's report of Howe's contemplated movement on Philadelphia, which, without presuming to open, he laid on the table; then bent for the second beneath a chair where it had been whisked by that fateful draft.

How well I knew it! It was the letter addressed to himself by Drummond. It was still folded, and as he took it in his hands his eye naturally fell on its superscription.

Keyed as I was to every movement of the man, I marked his start and saw his brows lift in surprise.

"What is this?" he exclaimed. "A letter for me — and open?"

Dorothy fairly staggered against the trellis, and there stood looking aghast at him. She seemed to have suddenly lost her powers as an actress. My instinct was to throw open the door and confront the officer, but as he did not appear to notice the embarrassment of the girl, being intent on the paper, I held back and awaited developments.

Nor did I have to wait for long.

"How came this here?" he asked.

His voice was now hard, and his face bore a scowl.

"It was given to me to deliver," returned Dorothy, gathering her wits."

"By whom, may I ask?"

"By — by Mr. Baxter."

The man gave a start.

"And has he been here?"

"Yes."

"I think there is something strange in this. Where and how did he go?"

"I do not know."

"And where is Bull?"

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"That means you will not! 'S blood, my lady! Dost think my affection for you will allow me to be trifled with? You could not have been asked to deliver this letter! Dost know its contents?"

The girl drew herself to full height.

"I do, Sir John Dirck."

"And possibly this, also," he said, his pale face growing red as he took from the table the paper he had first picked from the floor. Without excusing himself, he unfolded and read it, then brought his hand to his forehead.

"My Heavens!" he exclaimed. "This is your writing!"

"It is my writing, Sir John."

The girl had now recovered her poise and stood with uplifted chin as immovable as a statue, and her face was nigh the color of one.

“And those other documents you hold?”

“They would bear out the conclusion you have in all probability arrived at, sir.”

Dirck took a step forward.

“Dorothy! Dorothy! May Heaven help you! How came you by these things? Was it —”

“I refuse to be catechized.”

“Now, by the splendor of the king, I see the thing!” he returned, his face growing black with rage. “The man who insulted me last night was Talbot Marcy himself.”

“It was, Sir John.”

“Talbot Marcy! Dolt that I was that I did not fathom it! Had I but known him — had Bull but guessed —”

“Lieutenant Bull has found him out to his own sorrow,” interrupted the maiden. “Moreover, he has confessed that he was the means of Mr. Marcy’s being pressed, when the press-gang might have taken others at the same time, but did not. Is it possible that Sir John Dirck, who was with him, was a party to that low treachery? I ask him.”

The man stood looking at her, his face changing

from red to white, then back again. Suddenly he burst out: "Dorothy — Dorothy —" The girl raised her hand.

"Do not appeal to me, Sir John; I see more than you would allow. But this I would say: You knew my relations to Mr. Marcy. I had thought him perfidious or dead. You had assured me of the latter, and more than hinted at the former. Did you hope to gain my regard in any but a manly way? I knew him last night, and my emotion overcame me."

"And, in the face of this, his shift will be short. He is a spy!" burst out the officer, losing control of himself and dashing the back of his hand against Drummond's letter. "I cannot fight him; he must hang. What is the meaning of this letter concerning Philadelphia?"

"I wrote it."

"For what?"

"For him to carry to General Washington, Sir John."

The man's fine, dark eyes opened wide, his lips fell apart, and it was his turn to stagger backward. He lifted his arm and pointed his finger toward her, his body half bent.

"You! A traitress!" he exclaimed in a strident whisper.

The girl did not move.

"Nay, madam," he said, recovering himself. "Even my efforts, backed by my affection, could not save you were this known. Where in Heaven's name is Bull? Marcy must be taken at once. I will soon be relieved of him. Come; I will see the rest of those papers."

"You shall not see them, sir."

"Dorothy," he said, his anger lowering to pleading, though he made no move toward her, "I beg of you, for your sake as well as for mine. To what depth have you gone in your infatuation? I must have those papers."

"Would you use force? You dare not!"

"Dorothy, I demand those papers in the name of His Majesty, whose officer I am. I will save you against yourself and in spite of yourself. I love you! Cannot you see that the only way —"

She interrupted him.

"Sir John Dirck, I wish an understanding with you — once and forever — and the consequences I will submit to. My tale lies in two short statements. I love Talbot Marcy, and am proud to confess it. I have loved him since we were children together, and I am for no other man. So much for that. Have you ever heard of Maude Baxter?"

“I have heard of her. My faith, Dorothy —”

“I am Maude Baxter. I have gathered such information as I could, and transmitted it. In other words, sir, I am a spy, though I hate the word; but, as I could serve my country in no other way, I must needs be and am proud to bear the title.

“And now, do you think, Sir John Dirck, that I have placed myself openly before you without knowing where I stand, e’en though the ground be slippery? Sir John, Lieutenant Bull will never come to you. He is dead, or dying. But Talbot Marcy is immediately available. It was he you saw riding to meet me by my appointment.”

With that the girl stepped to the door behind which I was standing and threw it open.

Numbed by Dorothy’s words as he undoubtedly was, I doubt if any conceivable situation could have taken the officer more by surprise; and my state was little better than his, for the last thing I had looked for was that the girl should expose me. She afterward explained that she acted as she did that the terrible interview might not be unnecessarily prolonged, knowing that in the end I must appear by being discovered or discovering myself; more than all else, she felt the unwisdom of permitting the officer to depart and spread an alarm.

Dirck stood as if suddenly turned to stone, and I think that I might have drawn my sword and run him through without opposition at that moment. But I was far too dazed by the unlooked-for action of the girl, and I do not possess the murderer's instinct. What I did then was only to walk from the closet.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIGHT

“**Y**OU!” was all that Dirck could say as he took a step backward and looked at me from head to foot.

“The same, Sir John.”

“What are you doing here?”

“I came for a purpose: this,” and, stepping over to Dorothy, I passed my left arm round her slim waist.

“Sir John Dirck,” I continued, drawing her close to me, at which she made no demur, “I know what brought you here; but whether attended by good fortune or bad, remains to be seen.”

“Where, sir, is Lieutenant Bull? Have you seen him?”

“Yes. And I saw him struck down; not by my hand, but by one — a boy — he had outraged. I believe him dead by this. I am in his uniform, sir.”

The man’s face worked convulsively.

“And are you a spy within the lines?”

"It is true, Sir John. Therefore, you may have an inkling of my desperation. Had you but stumbled in a few minutes later you would not have made the discovery, and had gone on your way unsuspecting. But, sir, as it is, you will see that we cannot both go hence. I heard you state that you would not fight me. Sir John Dirck, you will have to fight me."

I had myself well in hand by this; though, as yet, he had hardly recovered from the shock of seeing me. I cannot accuse the man of cowardice; but when he found himself as fairly beset by me as I by him, he looked around, as if seeking for a means of escape, or perhaps it was from sheer surprise.

At all events, he took a step toward the arched opening in the trellis. In an instant I had disengaged myself from Dorothy, whipped out my sword, and sprang toward him.

"An you attempt to run, sir, I will stab you in the back before you have gone ten paces, and I care not for the blood of a coward."

"You are a presuming scoundrel!" he replied, swinging to face me and turning red. "Run from you? No, nor from no man."

And with that he drew his sword.

"One moment, sir," I said. "Your excitability

is pardonable, in the circumstance, and I will overlook the epithet. This is to be more than an affair of honor in which a trifle of blood will suffice. It will be no scene for any lady to witness. Dorothy, wait outside. Heaven will care for you if I fall."

The girl was as pale as death.

"Oh, Talbot! Talbot! Why did I bring you here?" she cried.

"The end were fitting whatever it be," I answered, taking her hand. "I would rather die now than swing from a gallows. Go, my love."

And then I bent and kissed her on the mouth and led her to the door. As she staggered from it I turned to my opponent.

"I have believed, sir," said I, "that you were an English gentleman and of a grade that would not stoop to do a dishonorable thing. Before I cross swords with you I desire to be satisfied on that point. I heard Miss Hilton ask you a question relative to my impressment three years ago. You did not answer her; will you answer me?"

"I deny your right to question me, you low scoundrel. I refuse to answer you."

"Which is a tacit admission of your guilt," I returned. "Will you not even tell me your motive?"

"Motive?" he burst out, betrayed by his own

passion. "The motive was to protect a gentleman from a coward who would only fight with a weapon in the use of which he was an expert. The motive was merited punishment. Now you have it!"

"Ah!" I returned, with a calmness in sharp contrast to his excitement and which must have galled him. "My eyes are opened to your style of honorable warfare. You forget, sir, that my country and myself were both insulted by the man whose guest I was and who should have protected me. I see that I should have been upon my guard against those of your honorable breed! To that end, and before we proceed to business I would ask one more question: Have you a pistol?"

"I would to Heaven I had!" he exclaimed. "I would shoot you like a dog."

"Perhaps it would be your duty; but as it is, this matter shall be irregular only in that we lack seconds and the usual formalities. We will assume position across the room, if you please, so that neither has the glare of the door in his eyes. I shall take no mean advantage of you. All I demand is despatch; I have no more time to waste. Off with your coat, sir."

"By the glory of the king!" he exclaimed, throwing off his scarlet jacket and tossing his plumed hat

to the table. "I am content to know that I am pitted against a man of gentle breeding. I apologize for dubbing you a scoundrel, but you are a most audacious rebel. As such I have my duty to perform. I am about to kill you, sir, and regret that I can show no mercy to one in your position."

"Sir John," I returned, whipping the air with my rapier. "I have nothing to regret save the necessity entailed on saving my own life. You may rest assured that if I draw safely from the coil surrounding me, I will so deal with the man who wrote yonder letter as to make him curse the day he penned it. You may curse him in turn; for, if you fall, he will be the cause of it. Art ready?"

He made no answer. He only saluted in form, biting his small mustache the while; then advanced until our steels crossed.

So far as stature was concerned, we were pretty evenly matched; for, though he topped me by an inch and his reach was a trifle more than mine, I was by far the heavier man, and younger by a year or two, with less dissipation in my history, and with a wrist and hand nigh twice as thick as his.

What skill he had I knew not; it might be such as would make weight and strength of little moment; but I had not been forced into the king's service for

nothing, and perforce had been drilled in the use of both cutlas and rapier until my heart was fair sick. As I stood before him it appeared like divine justice that my lessons had been driven into me by the faction against which I was to use them, and I had not been an inept pupil.

As steel struck steel with an ominous click, and the blades slid one against the other, Dirck's expression changed from anger to one of great intensity. The sudden lust of combat shone in his eyes, his breath came short and he caught his lip between his teeth, every muscle in his face showing strain. From the instant I felt his wrist my hope grew, for I saw he would not be invincible, and was weak where I was strong. Though his wrist had not given way under the pressure I put upon it he had shown a desire to avoid any test of mere strength, and evidently looked to skill to carry him through. To settle the matter as quickly as possible he took the initiative, and with a quick *disengage* made a lunge in *seconde* which would have done its work at once, only that I was on the lookout for it, and I soon saw that the man had been taught a few simple tricks in some conventional school of fence, he depending more on quickness of attack than on either general skill or finesse.

But with the tremendous stake in sight I was wary, and for a time forebore to press him, waiting until I had his measure, which presently became patent. For I finally marked he was possessed of the one quality which, unless controlled, would forever make him a failure as a duelist.

I mean impatience and irritability. At every futile lunge he would show his loss of temper and return to the charge in either, *appel* or *prime*, with a persistency and rapidity that kept me mostly on the defensive. But I knew an end would come to that, if I could successfully parry his attacks, and that his very energy and heat of temper would tire him.

Our swords rang through the barren room, the steels snapping and biting at each other as if endowed with the passions behind them.

Will the memory of that combat ever leave me? Not while I live. I felt it to be the climax of years of wrong; that events had led to this meeting as though inexorable fate had determined for it long before. I was all life — all energy. Dirck was fighting only because he was forced to; I, for more than mere continued existence. I was struggling for love, for honor, for vindication, and for Dorothy's safety, as well. If I felt the girl were ruined, disgraced, and doomed to physical as well as mental

suffering. In any event her days of usefulness as a spy were past.

I realized these things as I played my rapier, ever watchful of Dirck. Presently, so vehement was his fencing, his tactics had forced me well back and against the trellised wall. He was now sweating like an over-ridden horse; but as he noticed he was getting me where I could no longer retreat, his eye lighted.

It was then that my chance came. It was the result of an overzealous thrust in *appel* by my opponent, the force of which carried him forward and a trifle beyond his balance. Thus far, so evenly matched in power had we been, neither had received a touch, though once his point had caught in my shirt-sleeve; but now I encountered his blade from the outside, and his weakening wrist allowed me to carry it well to my right; then I drove my own rapier swiftly along his, my point always toward his chest.

It was too late for him to recover his ground and leap back, and too late for him to regain his guard. With a sibilant hiss the blades slipped along their lengths, my point just missing being caught by his hilt, and passing, it entered his right lung somewhat beneath the collar-bone, going almost through him.

As the steel penetrated his hot flesh he gave a groan, threw up his hands and fell forward on his face.

I knew I had not killed him nor even struck him in a vital part, but he was done for that day. I turned him over. He was unconscious from the shock of cold steel, and so, leaving him where he lay, I hurriedly gathered up the papers on the table and stepped from the summer-house.

By this the sun was shining and all the world looked fresh and clean and decked in bridal blossoms. It were a sin that man's hatred should mar such peace and beauty.

I knew Dorothy could not be far away, nor was she. Within two rods of the house she lay crouched in the wet grass at the foot of an apple-tree, her fingers in her ears and her eyes on the door. Such a strained look on a mortal's face I have never seen. For her everything had hung on the issue of the combat; her safety, her love, and perhaps her life. Undoubtedly her suffering had far transcended either Dirck's or mine.

As she saw me emerge she came to her feet with a bubbling sob, and running to me threw herself into my arms. "Thank Heaven!" she cried, then looked at me. "Is he — is he —"

"He is not dead," I said, myself shaking from re-

laxed strain. "But it will be many a day ere he is out again, though it may not be long before he becomes a source of danger. When found he will talk to a purpose."

"And you are unhurt?"

"Absolutely. But you must get from here; you cannot remain."

"No, I cannot. This has hardly bettered my state. Where can I go?"

"Where I do, my love. It is no time to weaken now. I see a way. Can you command a horse?"

"Yes, yes; at any time."

"And get through the lower lines?"

"I am well known. I would not need a pass by day."

"Then all is well. Gather your spirits. Go to the house and make any excuse for sudden absence. Get horse or carriage; ride to the city and go —" I hesitated.

"Where?" she asked, her hand on her heart. "There is no haven for me in all the town."

"Nay, but there is. Ride to Isaac Foster's. If you arrive before me, tell him I sent you, and wait for me. Right glad he will be to find you have been deceiving him. To-night we will board the sloop and flee. It is the only way."

"A desperate way, Talbot."

"Ah, my love, my love; we are in a desperate position. I will not leave you here to suffer alone. You must go."

"Then I must needs, since you command."

A bright spot burned on her cheeks and her lip trembled. "It will be a deliverance from this. Yes, I will go."

"I will wait on the road until I see you pass. Heaven bless you for a brave girl. There is hope for us, and light ahead. Hurry."

And hurry she did, like one who saw a ray of hope shining through the blackness of despair, first lifting her sweet mouth to mine and attempting a smile that I knew was meant to encourage me. Ah, brave little woman! I stood and watched her as she went under the pink and white canopy, and when she had disappeared I returned to Dirck.

He was now conscious, though still on the floor, too weak to rise or even speak.

"Major Dirck," said I, "I greatly regret the necessity of taking advantage of a fallen man. I would to Heaven we lived in happier times that I might claim your regard. I must place you in the closet that you cannot be readily found. It is the fortune of war, sir, and my necessity is great, as you are

aware. Within the hour I must repass the lower lines."

This frankness was to deceive him, for I well knew he would not believe me, as he would hardly think I really intended to return to where I would be in jeopardy. He could not answer, much less resist or even help himself, and so I was forced to drag him into the tool-room and ease him to the floor, after which I put his scarlet coat under his head. He kept his eyes on mine the while, as if he would speak if he could; and thus I left him, going at once to where my horse still stood in the lane.

The saddle was soaking, but as I climbed into it I noticed what I had failed to notice in my previous hurry. Each holster contained a pistol, both useless now because of wet primings, but they were a lucky find. They would give me two shots in the future, if shots became necessary, and it looked very much as if they might.

I rode slowly down the muddy lane and turned into the road by the barns, and as I did so I saw two men in the stable wing, but they only looked at me as they sat in the open door.

CHAPTER XVIII

JOHN QUINCE

FOR perhaps half a mile I went down the road at a hard gallop, then turned in under a clump of trees on a high bank close to and overlooking the road but out of sight from it. There I determined to wait for Dorothy to pass, and knew not what I would do if she failed to come.

By this I was well spent both in body and spirit. Withal that I had seen one man the same as killed that morning; that I had made a new engagement, the breaking of which meant a new danger; that I had taken a hard ride, been lifted on the wings of passionate love, fought the greatest fight of my life, and now lay in wait with the result of all still uncertain — with all these things, I say, piled atop of the doings of the night before, I had known not a mouthful of either breakfast or dinner, and by the sun it was then after one o'clock. There is a limit to human endurance and I felt I had nearly reached mine.

One hour, two hours went by. Many people passed either on horseback or in vehicles, and yet no

Dorothy. I had about determined to go to the nearest tavern and obtain refreshments, then return and charge the Apthorpe house and demand to see the girl, when I saw her coming.

To my astonishment she was not riding, nor was she alone. She sat in a chariot, and at her side was a lady of patriarchal appearance, who, though I had not seen her for years, I knew to be Madam Apthorpe. A liveried coachman was on the flaring hammer-cloth, a footman swayed on his stand behind, and ahead of the rattling team came a gorgeous outrider. My lady was evidently going abroad in state.

These things I saw as the equipage swept past, and I noted two others. First that my love looked straight ahead, her red lips compressed and her face flushed; and second, that at her feet lay a port-manteau.

The latter was the one thing that gave me a return of confidence. She had made such preparations for flight that she would not be destitute of feminine necessities. That thought had troubled me, but now I knew she had used foresight and had therefore regained her poise.

As the glittering mahogany vehicle swept from sight I mounted my horse and followed, keeping

some half a mile behind. As the lumbering chariot gained the top of a hill ahead, standing for an instant against the sky, I saw a horseman pass it.

He was riding at speed and did not stop. The carriage disappeared over the brow of the hill, the rider plunging into the hollow toward me, and soon I heard the ruffle of hoof-beats on the wet road. Then I saw him.

He was a young British dragoon officer, a cornet, I think, and I drew to one side to let him pass; but as he came nearly up to me he suddenly reined in and looked first at my horse and then at me, drawing his own animal across the road.

“Pardon, sir. Is this Lieutenant Bull?” he asked, bringing his hand to his shako in salute.

The question floored me for an instant, but as I had never seen the boy before, and by his question was aware that he did not know me, I answered with fair promptness.

“I am, sir. And what do you wish with me?”

His young face broke in a boyish smile of relief.

“By the horse, which I knew, and by the uniform, which I guess at, I thought so. Gad’s life, Mr. Bull! but you have given us a turn. We feared something foul had befallen you. Colonel Chadwick looked to find you at Fraunce’s, as you prom-

ised, but nothing was known of you there, and at the King's Arms he found his horse had been taken, by whom no one knew. Captain Blundel has been worried into a rage, for he sails to-night, so I hear, sir, because you failed him at ten, and then the colonel sent me out here to look for you, thinking you might be with Major Dirck, sir."

Here was a hornet's nest.

I cared little for the perturbation of Bull's friends, having known he would be missed. But what of this stripling? I could not have him trail beside me.

"I was with Sir John Dirck," I said. "I regret disturbing any one, but there was a little affair of honor for the major, and it detained me. I will explain to the colonel. Do you return, sir?"

"It shall be as you please, lieutenant," he answered, with boyish openness. "Now that you and the horse are safe, a load is off my mind and I am in no hurry. I will ride with you, and you have no objections."

"I have a small matter over Greenwich way and will go through the west gate," I said, hoping to throw him off.

"Faith, and I have never seen the west gate, sir. 'Twill be a chance, and in company. Think me

not a leech, lieutenant, but I was told to come back with you."

"As a prisoner? Now, by Heavens! this —"

He interrupted me with a joyous laugh.

"Gad's life! no. It is a matter of an issue. There were two of us sent for you. Cantrell went by the post road and I by this, and there is a wager between us. It is ten pounds to the one that brings the colonel's horse. Ods luck, I can ill afford to lose."

At this I forced a smile. Boy though he was, a boy might become suspicious if I persisted in dodging, and ten pound is a leech-like incentive to a cornet. Even if he consented to leave me he might follow. However, I tried one more throw at him.

"But, sir, I will confess my errand does with a lady. You must know the old adage of two being company. Sir, you will be making a third."

He slapped his thigh resoundingly.

"'S life, lieutenant! Think me not a marplot. It makes little difference where I get you, so I can bring in the horse. I will cross to the Greenwich road with you, then ride to the gate and wait. You need hurry neither business nor pleasure. The rest of the day is mine."

"Very well, my lad," I replied, fairly driven to

the wall, for now it looked to be hard sledding for me. "As time is nothing to you I will make it as little to myself. I have had no dinner, neither, mayhap, have you. At the first tavern we will dine."

"Agreed," he returned warmly. "Faith, my stomach yearns. A mile below is a house, not much to look at, but where we can dine like Howe. I am most honored by your acquaintance, sir."

So we went along, he chattering away on a hundred matters, mostly military, about which a naval officer was expected to know nothing, and I with my brain bothered as to how I might get rid of him. By the dinner I would gain time, and was not anxious to get into the city before dark. If worse went to worst I saw I would have to pick a quarrel with my gay cornet, a conclusion that went against me; and that, too, at some spot where there would be no witnesses to know how I left him, I had now been so long pressed by danger that I had no notion of slackening my pace toward freedom, for much more depended on me than my own safety.

With this weighing on me we turned into the short path which led to the obscure tavern of "The Jolly Fiddler," now long since gone, and leaving our horses with the hostler, entered the coffee-room.

The apartment was darkened by the low eaves of the long porch, and at first, with eyes dimmed by the blinding glare of the highway, I could make out little of the interior, though presently I saw we had taken a table near which was another, and at it I discovered two soldiers and a civilian, the latter with his back toward me.

I dropped into my chair, glad of a rest and the prospect of a meal, whatever might come after, and was persuading myself that it were perhaps wiser to keep the ensign near me than to send him on his way with the peremptory statement that his company was not wanted. It looked to come to that or killing him, for nothing could be more dangerous than to go into the city with him. When I should be ready to pass the lines I would get rid of him somehow; until then it behooved me to keep him by my side.

I had settled this last to my satisfaction when my attention was drawn to the adjoining table by a coarse anecdote told in a loud voice by the civilian. That the soldiers were a third drunk and he even more so was plainly apparent, and at the end of his story the civilian broke into a song, came to a stop as his memory failed him, then noticing the air of restraint in his companions who were

quieted by the entrance of what they supposed were two British officers, he swung full about to see who or what had occasioned it.

And then I seemed to freeze stiff for the second time that day. As his look met mine I stared in open-mouth astonishment, for before me and not ten feet away was John Quince in the flesh.

His eyes yet showed the discoloration caused by my fist, being now a greenish yellow, while his clothing and general appearance betokened hard usage. As he looked at me, steadying himself, and frowning as if struggling with a recollection, he lifted both hands to his head as if to scratch it into activity, and then I marked that his wrists were connected by handcuffs.

The matter of it and his being there leaped on me as plainly as though it lay before me in print. John Quince had escaped from New Haven and had in some manner reached the upper lines at King's Bridge. There he had told his story which naturally being doubted and himself suspected as a spy trying to penetrate to the city, he had been made a prisoner and was now on his way to where he could, and I knew would, vindicate himself and damn me peradventure.

Had fate carried me through so many quicksands

of peril for this ending? It appeared so at that moment of mental and physical depression; it looked as if my finely woven plans were to be blown to the winds. If Quince arrived in the city before me the Gloosecap would be guarded against my going out to her, and in course of time, short at that, Dorothy and I would be captured: I as soon as sighted; Dorothy as soon as Dirck could make it known that the girl was a spy. Nay, more — Isaac Foster would fall a victim to his devotion.

My consternation was utter, but my attitude and expression were not properly construed by the intoxicated sailor, who, I saw, had failed to recognize me in my strange dress. After a moment he turned his head with an insolent laugh and an oath, and said something to his guard.

I think I was but half myself at that time. I remember hearing my young companion call the waiter, damning the man's eyes for his sluggishness. I heard him order the dinner, which, even with this new and terrible danger close at hand I dared supplement with another order for a bottle of wine, which I knew I must not be there to drink. Then I excused myself for a moment and went out.

I went straight to the stable. My horse was about to be unsaddled, but telling the hostler to de-

sist, I handed him a shilling, sprang into the leather and rode out of the yard as leisurely as though I owned the land in all directions. I knew that from where he sat the cornet could not see me; for the others I cared not.

Once on the road I dug my heels into the horse's ribs and made my way for the Greenwich cross-road. Nothing but death should stop me now. I could no longer wait for darkness before reëntering the city; I must press on and take whatever lay in store for me.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LAST OF LINTON

AS I tore along, I figured on the chances remaining to me, and counted on two. First: that the subaltern would not miss me for the next ten or fifteen minutes; and when he did it would take him at least ten more to realize I had really gone, and then he would not know which way. Whether or not he would read in my sudden flight anything to rouse his suspicions of my true character, and give an alarm, remained to be discovered.

Second: that Quince had not recognized me, nor did he know I was in New York. The man was more than half intoxicated, and from the bottle before him and his present company he was likely to become wholly so before he started for the city. The result for him would probably be a night in the guard-house in order that he might become coherent.

But these matters were merely speculative on my part, and I acted in everything as though a score of fiends were hot-footed after me. I turned in my

saddle to see if I were being followed, but no figure broke the stretch of road.

Coming to the Greenwich cross-path, I wheeled into it, my horse making a plain trail on the rain-washed surface of the little used highway, and in due time drew up at the barrier I had passed a few hours before, my mount now in such a lather as to elicit the remark that I had done some hard riding.

I had no difficulty in going on, though I stopped long enough to beg fresh primings for my dampened pistol-pans; and, having readily obtained the powder, pushed on and across Lisenard's meadows, following the route of the morning.

But at the bars marking the termination of Broadway I abandoned my horse, not daring to risk its identification. Tying it in a clump of bushes, I put the pistols in my belt and climbed the gate, and from there walked into the city.

My destination was Isaac Foster's; my hope, that Dorothy was awaiting me there; my greatest wish, that the sun would hurry toward its setting. Down Broadway I went, walking rapidly, but with no interruption.

It was then past five o'clock; and when I came to the corner of King Street, I stopped, for in plain sight was a crowd around the door of the King's

Arms. The assemblage was neither noisy nor threatening, martial law having the populace under its firm grip, but it appeared to be waiting for some event with the patient curiosity usual to such groups.

My common sense warned me to put myself as far from this locality as possible. It was a nascent quality of judgment such as may be possessed by a horse caught in a blazing barn — though the flames have the greater influence, and he usually goes to his destruction; and I, while I knew I was doing a foolhardy thing, instead of hurrying on my way, deliberately crossed the road and went toward my late lodging.

But I was not quite so fascinated as to go on straight to my ruin. I felt that here was something closely concerning me, and my sudden thirst for information compelled me to take a measure of risk. It was much the same impulse as attracts a murderer back to the scene of his crime.

As I came upon the outskirts of the gathering I marked a soldier without a musket, and apparently off duty, standing against a fence, and when I asked him the cause of the crowd he turned and catching at my supposed rank, drew himself up and saluted respectfully.

"Caught a bally spy, sir."

"A spy? Where?"

"In the tavern, sir. Found him hiding in a room along of a dead man as nobody knows. The fust feller that broke in got shot; but the spy was took, an' he's in limbo. Hear he was a deserter, too, sir."

"Who was he? What was his name?" I asked, leaning against the fence, for I felt suddenly weak.

"Name o' Talbot Marcy, sir. Desp'rit party, I hear, sir. Went by the name o' Baxter, too. Provost's got him fast enough. He'll hang."

"How long ago was this?"

"Caught him an hour ago, sir. Just took him off. Young feller he was, sir; not much more than a boy. I saw him. Didn't look like he had the spirit he showed!"

I stared aghast at the soldier. My knees fairly shook beneath me, and my face must have shown something of my mental state for the man spoke up quickly:

"Wot's the matter, sir? Be you sick?"

"No, only fatigued," I said, bracing myself. "You spoke of a dead man. Who was he? Doesn't the proprietor of the tavern know him?"

"That's the p'int, sir. He ain't there. He is

knowed to have gone away some'res along about two o'clock, looking for a lost hoss. That's wot he said, but that's all in my bally eye, sir. This here has a bad look for him. They be out to catch him now, and we're waitin' to see him brought in. That's all, sir." The man brought his hand to his hat again. I turned my back on him and walked away.

So Bull was dead and Linton was lost. I never realized I had thought much of the lad until then. For some reason he had deferred his escape, and somehow, in a way I never learned, attention had been directed to my room, perhaps from the fact that I had been given Admiral Howe's letter and had not appeared at the barge on time. The rest I could surmise with fair accuracy, and it wrung my heart. In his desperation Linton had shot the first man who entered or forced his way into my apartment; then, knowing himself to be lost, had tried to save me by giving his name as Talbot Marcy.

But had he saved me?

Yes, for a time; for, unless he was at once brought before Howe or Cavendish, his deception might pass. It had been a merciful Providence which had sent mine host from the scene; and after the charger, too, for which he probably felt some measure of

responsibility. The cursed horse was like to be the ruin of everything. Had I left him hitched to the rail and hired a mount, this might not have happened.

Now, to you who read this memoir it may be that I am placed in the position of a coward in that I did not determine to at once clear the matter by giving myself up. Yet such an act would have been but to furnish a noose for my own neck and done nothing for Linton. For, beyond all else, he was a deserter from the king's service, and American born. He was doomed; but why should I have doomed myself? I have not yet been able to see. I did not cling to life merely from the instinct of self-preservation, nor from that oftentimes equally potent spur: cowardice. Dorothy's safety, if not her life, hung on my fortunes.

In less than half an hour I was at Isaac Foster's, and to my joy found Dorothy there. She had recovered from the worst effects of her experience of the morning, so far, at least, as to her nerve, and was cool and collected though showing the marks of her recent strain. She had met with no opposition in getting away from the scene of the tragedy, playing her part with consummate skill, and her plan was unconsciously furthered by her hostess

who told her she herself was going into the city that afternoon. Madam Aphthorpe had been dropped at the Governor's mansion to make a call on some member of the executive household; then the girl had been taken to a friend's for an alleged overnight visit, the chariot returning to the Governor's. Dorothy had then gone straight to Queen Street, opened her heart to Isaac, who took her into his own great one, and had already changed her dress from the fashionable costume she had worn, now being simply clad in some dark stuff. She seemed to intuitively know what was the proper thing to do.

I was mightily relieved to know that Dirck had not been found at the time she left the mansion. His absence had made the family curious, but under the necessity of fine lying, Dorothy had explained, inventing a plausible story of his having met Bull by appointment in the orchard, and going with him on foot down to the river on a matter which, he had said, might take him the rest of the day.

All this and much more had been told to the Quaker before I arrived, and little remained to do but recount my subsequent adventure and wait for darkness. I was given food, and ate like a famished man, as, indeed, I was, but Isaac was very

sober as he sat and watched me, and I soon knew the reason.

“Thee has put an end to my days of usefulness, I fear!” he said shaking his fine old head. “And when the trouble comes out, as it is bound to do, I will be placed in jeopardy for having endorsed thee.”

“Not so, Isaac!” I answered. “In a short time we will be gone, and none knows we have been here this day. Go you then to headquarters and be the first to denounce me. You did not vouch for my truth and loyalty — only that I was Talbot Marcy; and you have Carey Drummond’s letter to account for it. Curse me as a rebel and a spy; curse me as anything. It may help Linton and it will clear you.”

“It might work! It might work!” he repeated, doubtingly. “Thee has a quick wit, my son, yet it goes against me to denounce the child of my old friend.”

But I soon convinced him it was the only way he could save himself from worse than suspicion, and he finally decided to act on my advice.

I never knew a day so long; nor was escape at the end of it by any means certain. To go to the usual landing and demand a boat, as I had done many

times with success, were now out of the question; but I had another plan — one involving both risk and inconvenience, and it was the last hope. If I failed in that, Dorothy, as well as I, was lost.

Isaac could give me no news save the one item that the *Dragon* had gone up the Sound River at the turn of the ebb at noon, instead of waiting for the top of the flood. How much Bull's absence had to do with the change of Captain Blundel's plans I knew not, but it was a comfort to know that she was out of the way.

As the sun went down, I stood and looked out of the window. There was not a breath of air stirring, the smoke from chimneys going straight up, but I saw, with much satisfaction, that it bid fair to be a black night, as the sky was slowly packing with heavy blue clouds, telling of a change from the unusual heat, and there would be no moon.

My nerves tingled with mingled apprehension and impatience as I alternately walked the floor and stopped by Dorothy's side to cheer her, using my half believed arguments to cheer myself as well. I had frankly given the girl to understand that I would never be taken alive though I promised to cling to the edge of the precipice over which I hung, till it crumbled beneath me. She made no demur at

that. She had the spirit of a Spartan, this delicate, gentle maiden. There were no tears, no protests, no moaning over adverse fate. Weak physically she was, as are the best of women, but in mind, heart and spirit she was a giantess.

It was just eight o'clock, being dark enough for my purpose; and I was about to tell the Quaker we would be off, when a knock came at the door, and when I leaned over the balustrade, a freshly loaded pistol in either hand, to learn if I had been tracked, I heard a voice say:

“Mr. Isaac Foster, you be wanted at headquarters at once, sir; and there must be no delay in your going.”

“I will obey his excellency immediately;” answered the old man, who had gone to the door; “I will follow thee in less than ten minutes. So tell his excellency, and tell him that I have bad news to communicate.”

I heard the door close on the messenger, and the next moment the Quaker came running up stairs, his face shining in the light of the candle he carried. “I have little to fear now,” he said. “Had Howe doubted me he would have sent a file of men instead of an unarmed messenger. But I must go to him at once, and damn thee with my tongue when

I get there. God bless thee, lad! When I get back thee must both be gone from here, and my prayers will go with thee."

He wrung my hand in his great, soft palm, and stooping his tall figure, kissed Dorothy on the forehead.

And so he went. And so after him went we, though Heaven knows that had I been aware of what the future held I would have quailed at it.

I did not look to be stopped in the street. By this time I knew the proprietor of the King's Arms must have returned, but the chances of his identifying the body of Bull were small. Even were my true status known, it were improbable that Talbot Marcy would be seached for in the guise of a British officer until Dirck could tell his story.

With Dorothy on my arm and her portmanteau in my hand, I walked out of Isaac Foster's house with no attempt at concealment. Whatever might be stirring in military circles, Queen Street was quiet enough, the dimly burned lantern in front of every fifth house doing no more than making the way plain.

It was dark, bidding fair to be darker; and, indeed, I have rarely known a blacker night than that of May 18, 1777.

CHAPTER XX

ADRIFT

HAD I been either a civilian or a common soldier we would have been stopped within the first two hundred paces, but to block the way of a British officer escorting a lady was another matter to the occasional sentinel we met and passed. Once I was accosted by the patrol, but in return I so damned the fellow, and with such vigor, asking if a naval officer on his way to keep an appointment was to be subject to outrage, that he stepped back abashed, very probably thinking it more than his duty to intercept an officer of His Majesty's fleet with his "light o' love" on his arm.

I know not what streets we traversed, but by a roundabout way we reached the disused and deserted shipyard south of Corlears Hook, my objective-point.

Dorothy had hardly spoken a word, and her nervous tension was shown in the grip of her hand on my arm. Well she might have been stiffened by the uncertainty of the future; it was pregnant with

events. I had told her of my determination, and seen her shrink at it; but not a murmur had she made.

Once in the shipyard, we picked our way to a long disused launching run, over which loomed the neglected skeleton of a half-built schooner. There I seated the girl on a bulk of timber between the ribs of the abandoned structure, and laid my pistols and sword at her side.

Taking off my coat and waistcoat, shoes and stockings, I bent and kissed her. There were no farewells, though each knew it might be a last caress; nor was there a moment's hesitation on my part. God only knows what the little woman felt at that time. Her case was worse than mine. I had action ahead; she, a season of passive waiting, and if I did not come back her world would collapse.

Without a word of false comfort I turned abruptly from her, and feeling my way along the launching run to the water's edge, quietly slid myself into the stream. The tide was running to the last of the flood, and I struck out until it caught me; then let it take me with it. Not a splash did I make, my present fear being of a patrol-boat.

My plan was simply this: not being able to go

out to the *Gloosecap* by boat, I would get to her by swimming. If successful, and it appeared the least of my trouble, I would take her dingy and return to the shipyard, and, with Dorothy once aboard the sloop, would cut the vessel's cable; and, still protected by darkness, drift down on the ebb, trusting that we might clear guard-boats and anchored ships, until it would be safe to hoist sail.

It all hung on chance and the guiding hand of Providence.

I knew where the *Goosecap* lay, as well as I knew the location of the orchard in my old home. True it was that the darkness and the oily shine from the black water bothered me, the river being as smooth as a pan of warm grease; but when I came mightily breaking my head against the spar-buoy, which marked the little reef not thirty fathoms south of the craft, I knew I was in the right line.

After that it was not ten minutes ere I saw her top-hamper cut against the faint sky, but I became somewhat puzzled when I discovered that she bore a dim light aft. I knew not what to make of that, having told Rance to show no light save one forward to mark the sloop's anchorage, but now the forward light was missing. It came to me that the negro might have been taken ashore, a prisoner, since Talbot

Marcy had been discovered to be a spy, and the vessel placed under guard. And I was more than half way right in my surmise.

But there was now no turning back. As the sloop was bow on to the dying current I caught hold of her bob-stay as I drifted down to her, and slowly raised myself that the water draining from me might make no noise. Then I heard a man's voice that was not the voice of the negro. I set my teeth and listened but made out nothing but the droning tone of the speaker who was clearly an Irishman. Cautiously pulling myself up to the martingale, I finally crawled aboard over the heel of the bowsprit and, lying flat on my stomach, slowly snaked past the bitts until I got my head beyond the edge of the little galley. I could not yet command a view of the entire cockpit, but I saw enough.

A pierced tin lantern stood on the narrow strip of deck by the cockpit rail, its feeble glimmer being sufficient to bring out the scarlet back of a soldier seated on the locker, with his hat off. It also brought out the polished bayonet of the musket resting between his knees.

He was smoking a pipe and talking to Rance, who squatted by the wheel, the whites of the negro's eyes shining in the points of light. Ah, but it was a

goodly sight, that of the negro. His face was sober; but there was no fright on it, albeit the conditions showed that he was a prisoner and that the sloop was being guarded, and it took me but a moment to determine that the guard consisted of but one man.

I had no hesitation of doing what was plainly to be done, for at that moment I was nerved to any undertaking. Quietly lifting my hand, I loosened an empty belaying-pin from its ring around the mast, then worked my way aft. When I came abreast of the standing rigging I got to my knees, then to my feet, and with a bound was behind the soldier.

He turned just in time to see me, but not in time to avert the blow. The belaying-pin struck him fairly on top of his peruke, and with only a snap of his eyes he pitched forward in a heap to the deck of the cockpit, his musket clattering after him.

"Hush!" I whispered. "Not a word, Rance! It is I, your master!"

"'Fo' Gawd!" was all the negro could say as he jumped to his feet and stood blinking at me, but he soon came to himself. "Whar yo' come from, Marse Talbot. Dey tole me you was took."

I answered in a whisper. "They think so, but they have the wrong man. Quince has escaped from

New Haven and our cake is dough, if we are caught! Get that fellow below, and gag him; he is only stunned. Where's the dingey? Wake up, but make no noise."

With a quickness of brain which, under the circumstances, many a white man would have lacked, the negro seemed to comprehend the altered situation, and acted accordingly. Springing aft, he hauled in the long painter of the boat trailing astern, and brought it alongside; then, without a further word of instruction, he dragged the unconscious Red-coat into the cabin. I do not think he spoke to me the while; I know I did not to him.

I ripped off my soaking shirt and, tearing it to strips, made a muffle for the oar-locks; then stepped into the boat and beckoned to the black.

"I am going for Mistress Dorothy, Rance. Leave the lantern where it is. So long as it burns I will know all is right; if any one comes, manage to knock it overboard. I will be gone twenty minutes."

"Yessir — yessir! An' if any pusson comes, may I shoot? Der's de gun!"

"Better shoot yourself," I said. "If we are caught, we'll hang higher than Haman."

With that I pushed off. Certain it was that we

had not made noise enough to be heard on shore, nor did I hear an alarm from any quarter as I again went into the blackness, moving slowly and hardly daring to pull an oar for fear of making a splash. I was afraid to hurry. But I reached the shipyard, beached the dingey, and made my way to the skeleton of the schooner.

There was Dorothy, well-nigh rigid from suspense; but all the brave girl did when I felt my way to her was to hold up her white face to mine that I might kiss her again. She said that one man had passed through the yard bearing a light, but he had not seen her. As I got her into the dingey, after several falls over blocks of wood, I heard a distant vessel strike three bells and St. Paul's strike one. It was half past nine; and, if ever the tide was to run ebb, it should be running then.

As I pulled into the stream I noticed the boat sag toward the south, and when at last I could see the light still burning on the deck of the *Gloosecap*, I felt a sense of exultation that was hard to confine in silence.

In ten minutes more we were aboard. The sloop had now swung partly round to the change of current; but, not waiting for the rush I knew would come later, I blew out the lantern and, going for-

ward, cut the cable, letting the severed end drop quietly into the water.

We were off. Slowly, as if loth to part from her berth, the sloop moved to the influence of the infant ebb, and as silently as the clouds above us we began to drift down the river. Would I be connected with the disappearance of the *Gloosecap*? What would be the thoughts of the guard ashore when in the morning, or before, if the sentry was changed, they discovered the sloop had gone without a sound, without a breath of wind to move her, and carrying with her one of the units of His Majesty's forces.

Thoughts! My own bothered me too much to think what theirs might be. Slowly enough we drifted, now broadside to the ebbing tide, and so quietly that I would not have known we moved save for the few shifting lights ashore.

Aye, we were off; yet, when I considered the gantlet we were to run ere we tasted of real freedom, I was not elated.

I am not going into the details of that drift, the very remembrance of which gives me the pent and choked feeling I then experienced when each moment bore its threat; not even am I going to tell of how, when in the tide off Nuttens Island, then moving swiftly on the rush of water, the force of which in-

creased by the minute, we were beset by one of the harbor patrol-boats which dashed up to us with a short, quick hail that for a moment made me think all was lost.

Enough to say that the officer had heard nothing of Talbot Marcy nor Lieutenant Bull; and when by the light of his lantern he saw me in the uniform of the navy; when I showed my pass as Quince, and gave him a sight of Admiral Howe's despatch, he became mightily respectful and let me go on, only saying that I must be in a devil of a hurry to risk stranding and collision on such a night instead of waiting for daylight and a wind.

And I was in a devil of a hurry, being careful, too, to show it, also careful to keep the officer from the cabin where were Dorothy, the bound and gagged Redcoat, and Rance with the fellow's musket ready to bayonet him if he made a sound.

It had been close to ten o'clock when I cut the cable and started the drift, and it was past midnight when we came abreast of Robbin's Reef, off the north shore of Staten Island, the shoal being marked by a bug-light. At that hour the flat calm was as yet unbroken by the slightest breeze. Past twelve. I knew it, for never were we beyond the sound of bells on some man-of-war. The fleet

was anchored from the Grand Battery to Gravesend Bay, and along the Staten Island shore — twenty sail, at least, yet not one did we catch sight of, only hearing the hours struck, and we were more than that out of their ken.

Then I became beset by a new fear. We were drifting at the rate of some five miles an hour, spinning around and entirely helpless in the rush of water. If the calm held we would still be as inert as a log of wood, and when the tide should turn, as it would somewhere about four o'clock, we would be flung back over our track and with enough daylight to permit our being seen by every vessel in the bay. We had now no anchor to hold what had been gained; that lay at the spot from which we had fled.

This harrowing possibility of a reversal of fortune put my temper on edge and I was no angel in those hours; it made the minutes fly when they had dragged before, but I was not to experience misfortune in New York Bay. When I was well-nigh desperate, and in imagination saw the east beginning to glow, a light breeze, harbinger of the coming dawn yet two hours off, came out of the west, and when I felt it I ran the risk of noise from rattling blocks and got the canvas aloft, and only the long

beset can know the relief I felt as I heard the bell-like drops fall from the cutwater, felt the pressure of the helm, and caught the then music of the mainsheet as it creaked under the growing strain.

The wind increased so that I was no longer afraid of prowling guard-boats, for no oarsmen might catch us now; and as we slowly heeled to its force I became sane again, and with only the broadest of broad pilotage laid my course down the bay. Black night was still about us, and ahead still lay a menace in the shape of the Craven Shoals, a shallow strip of sand obtruding itself in what is known as the Narrows. But by God's grace our keel struck neither sand nor rock that night, and when the ghastly radiance of the earliest dawn showed the broad sand spit that shoots eastward from the island south of Gravesend, I was ready to weep for joy.

For there was the sea before me, now snarling in the fresh wind; kinder than the land, and far less cruel than is man to man.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAST OF THE GLOOSECAP

AND now which way to go? I was not prepared to say, having had up to this enough else to consider and had given no thought to destination, being still overpowered at the miracle of our escape. For nothing less than a miracle did it seem to me as I looked back over our long and perilous course, and my memory of it makes it nothing less even now.

Washington, I had reason to believe, was in Middletown in Jersey, and to reach him by the shortest way meant running ashore at some point on the Jersey coast, landing without knowing friend from foe, making a journey north through the pine forests, and penetrating the British lines which then stretched well-nigh across the State. That Dorothy could do these things was impossible; that I could leave her was equally impossible.

What then? All that remained was to sail the length of Long Island, double Montauk Point and

hold north for the Connecticut coast. Once there I would place Howe's papers in the hands of the military authorities, and Washington could be reached by couriers traveling through a friendly territory; once there Dorothy would be safe. We could make our way down the coast to New Haven, and there I would claim a double reward — a wife and a commission in the army; I would have fairly won both.

This was my dream — a rosy one, and so, saying nothing of my plan to the others, I let out the sheet and laid a course along Long Island. Mayhap, it was well I did; for as the dawn drew into broad daylight and the sun leaped from the sea, I saw, sneaking along Sandy Hook, two men-of-war inward bound, and had I tried for Jersey I would have run into them.

Now there came a time I both delight and dread to write about. Delight, because then, in the wide freedom of the sea, for a time I felt safe and let my pent-up flood of affection for the girl find relief. Not that I was fond and foolish, but every heart knoweth its own joy as well as sorrow; and my joy went forth in ways that she, at least, could understand. Her presence and the hope of its continuance were the only bright spots then, and they were bright enough.

As for the rest; I have only to record disappointment and a measure of suffering. Of course the cabin was given over to Dorothy, and the recovered Redcoat, wild at his easy capture, threatening and foul-mouthed, being of a low order of mankind, was confined in the galley, his hands and feet bound, but his mouth relieved of the gag.

He informed me that Quince had come in, and though drunk had told his story after being recognized by the sergeant, who was well acquainted with him; that Linton's identification had been cleared, the boy having confessed that it was he who had killed Bull; that the country above the lines, and the city, were being scoured for me, and that a guard lay at the landing hoping I would attempt to escape by way of the sloop, though none had thought of my capturing her in the fashion adopted. Rance was to have been taken ashore in the morning.

The fellow had all the force and violence that characterizes those of his nation, and freely stated that had he known of my coming it would have been the making of his fortune, and he seemed to consider it a personal matter between us that I had deprived him of a golden opportunity to get reward and promotion for capturing me. After all, he would have been amusing could I have regulated his voice or

kept Dorothy from ear-shot of his vile language. But he was the least of my troubles.

We were short of food, though we had plenty of water. The last of Rance's rations of bacon and meal had been scantily helped out by what provisions we found in the prisoner's haversack, but the food on board would not have satisfied two men for one day, yet it had to do four mouths for two days. Rance and I stood it, as we might have stood actual starvation for a time, but the fare was both coarse and insufficient for the girl. Not a single delicacy was there aboard, and at the end of two days it looked as if there might be two more to come without a mouthful of any kind.

For, for two days did we sail and drift, and still the coast loomed abeam. It was because the wind which had started us soon gave out, then blew against us, then fell calm, then puffed and died again. When the air was calm the tide did with us as it listed, now setting us backward, now forward, sometimes threatening to throw us on the beach, then drawing us far to sea. Heaven knows I was harassed and at my wit's end. I was free, yet, in truth, more of a prisoner than I had been since I struck Bull and leaped into the sea from the *Dragon*. Hither and yon we were sent at the sweet will of the tide which seemed

to possess a fiendish intelligence in threatening us. Above, the sky was clear, yet all this time I knew there was a merry breeze to the north of us, for the clouds in that direction told of wind on the Sound; but for hours together not a breath would cross the land and reach the ocean.

It looked to end in our going ashore and risking capture, or drifting hither and thither until starvation overtook us or some cruiser had us in hand. The last would have meant death for all save the prisoner, who alternately sang and cursed and slept. His case was better than ours.

We had drifted back and forth so often that at last I was completely out of bearings and knew not off what part of Long Island, or Nassau, as it was then called, we were hovering, but at length the knowledge was vouchsafed me. It was about five o'clock on the twenty-first day of May, and the sun was sliding down the west. We were then lying in the deadest of dead calms and the tide was at the tail of the flood.

It had carried us inshore to within a mile of the land, and the white beach looked threatening, though there was but little surf. We lay rolling lazily, and I was praying that a wind might rise during the night, and sat dejected with the girl half asleep at

my side, when Rance, who had clambered aloft, sang down:

"Big breeze comin' from east, Marse Talbot!"

"Thank Heaven for it!" I cried, jumping up.

"An' I 'low it's bringin' down a sail, sah," called the negro, a moment later.

"What sort of a sail?" I asked.

"Can't tell fo' sho, sah. You better come up wif de glass."

I needed no second hint. A sail dead ahead and coming west on a strong breeze was not to be ignored, and taking the telescope from its slings I clambered up the sail-hoops and was soon seated on the spreader alongside the negro.

"Do you know what part of this infernal coast we are off?" I asked, as I clutched a stay and lengthened the glass.

"Well, sah; dat water inside ain't de Great Souf, dat's sho. 'Tain't big enough. I 'low hit must be Shinnecock Bay," he answered. "An' yender is de Shinnecock Hills. I dar' be swo'n, Marse Talbot, dat's Shinnecock Bay. I can see de inlet t'rough de beach."

He was right. I recognized it then; and beyond, though cut from sight by the point of Pond Quogue, must be Canoe Place. We had drifted something

more than two-thirds the length of Long Island, and were now not many miles from the spot at which I had gone ashore after my escape from the schooner. A thin line of surf beat on the long stretch of sand, save where the narrow inlet gave access from the ocean which freshened the otherwise land-locked bay. But I did not then give it much attention.

Far to the east the sea had turned dark blue under the coming wind, and against it there was a pearly speck, a sail barely discernible by the naked eye. I got the telescope on it at last, steadying the tube against the swaying mast, and then I almost dropped it.

The vessel — a schooner — was still below the horizon, as to hull, but there was no mistaking the cut and set of her single square sail. I knew it as I know my own hand.

The schooner was the *Dragon*; of that I had not a doubt; and she was coming directly toward us, hand over fist, while we lay like a water-soaked log wallowing in the trough of the sea, and in a dead calm.

I groaned aloud. Was I to be forever cursed by the menace of the damnable schooner! This was my third experience, or it looked to be so, and I had a superstitious respect for the number three.

The *Dragon* seemed to have followed me like Nemesis, from the beginning, and now, without effort on her part, it appeared that she would make useless all I had risked. The cause of her presence was plain enough. While we had been drifting to and fro without a breath she had picked up her heels in the wind of the north, and was now swinging around the island on her homeward trip.

Nothing had delayed her, but now she bid fair to take a prize worth having. She could not miss us, though I did not believe she had yet seen us, we being hull down to her and but a speck on the sea. But we could not move until the breeze bringing her was on us, and then it would be too late to run even had there been a haven to run to. She would board and search us, we being of a size that has no business oceanward, and though I might not be easily recognized, and Dorothy and the negro not suspected, the presence of the captured soldier would damn us beyond peradventure.

It all went through my head with the speed of lightning. I turned to the negro, and a sight of my face was enough for him.

“Fo’ de lan’ sake, Marse Talbot! What you see?”

“’Tis the *Dragon* again. We can not get away!”

He had no words in return for this bit of information, only looking at me dumbly, and I snapped the tube together and slid down the rigging, bidding him to follow. I went to where Dorothy sat in the cockpit.

“Yonder comes the ubiquitous *Dragon!*” I broke out. “We are cursed by her. When she sees us, we are lost, for the soldier will tell all. I cannot murder him.”

She looked up at me quickly, but did not fall into a panic. I might have known she would not.

“We are not to be lost at this late day, Talbot,” she said. “Let us take to the land; all are not enemies ashore.”

“What matters that, if we know not friends from enemies?” I returned hopelessly, for I was fagged from lack of food and sleep, and a plethora of worry. “We are off Shinnecock Bay. At Canoe Place is a detachment of the British, and there is not a house to hold us nearer than Hampton. Even there we would be betrayed.”

“Could we but get to Hampton,” she returned, laying her hand on my arm, “We are almost home.”

“Home?”

“It is but five miles from Sag Harbor. From

Sag Harbor we might cross the bay to Greenport. I have friends there on whom I could count."

"Marse Talbot," said Rance, clapping his hard hands together but speaking low, that the prisoner might not hear him, "we can take de dingey an' run tro' de inlet to de bay. 'Clar to goodness we can 'scape! We row t'rough de bay clar to Hampton, den go to Sag Harbor an' hide ober night an' next day, I bet dis nigger get er boat to cross to Greenpo't!"

"Hide where?" I asked, my head beginning to clear.

"In my qua'ters, sah. 'Tain't no place fo' de lady, but it'll do. Hit don' make no difference if I is seen. I 'splain my bein' away an' comin' back. Marse Drummond an' Miss Debby nebber know you is near. Den we all sneak away de nex' night."

By the Lord! Why had I not thought of some such thing? In sudden revulsion from intense depression I slapped the negro on the back as a token of appreciation of his wit, and nigh knocked the faithful fellow over the low rail. Yes, we would go to Sag Harbor, or try to. It were possible, and even feasible, though it would mean a five mile tramp over mighty rough footing, a matter that would tax Dorothy. And I so far agreed with the negro as

to see that if we approached his cabin by night we might there hide until he could obtain a boat by which to cross to Greenport.

Hide! Yes, I would hide for a time; but as the picture of Rance's quarters and my father's house came to my mind there arose in me a passion easily defined. I would be next door — almost within arm's reach of my cousin Carey Drummond, and it must go hard indeed with me if before leaving there was not an old score settled.

My blood began to boil at the thought. I would come upon him at a time when he would be looking for the news of my taking off. He had called me a hawk, even as others had, and now I would show a hawk's nature. I would swoop down on him and give him a taste of my talons. A hawk! Aye, I had all the rapacity of that bird of prey as I fashioned the immediate future.

As the scheme cleared in my brain I became animated, excitement and the necessity of the moment taking the place of food. And there was not a minute to lose if our quickly hatched plan was to work successfully.

“Slap the galley-hatch over the Redcoat. He must not mark our going,” I said to Rance. “Then get every rag off the sloop that she may not be easily

seen. There is but little to get ready to take with us."

The last was unfortunately true. The dingey was trailing astern, and had been, we not having had ambition enough to hoist it to its davits. It was at once brought alongside, and my sword, the two pistols, the musket and the two dozen rounds of ammunition captured with the soldier, placed in it, together with an immense jug of water and the last few remaining mouthfuls of biscuit. This done I went below and took from its hiding-place in the ballast Carey Drummond's letter to Sir John Dirck. It was my trump card, and with it I had my game with my cousin as good as won.

Nothing else was taken, save the telescope and a blanket for the girl, for the nights were chill and she might need the latter; indeed, there was little more we could take without lumbering the small craft above its capacity.

When all was ready I handed Dorothy into the dingey and took a last look over the little sloop I had known so well, and had it not been for the prisoner, who was now cursing volubly at being shut from light and air, I would have scuttled the vessel.

But we left it rolling to the swells, and made for the inlet some two miles away, and it was astonishing

how soon the abandoned craft seemed to dwindle in size. There was something pathetic about her as she tipped lazily, her canvas lying loose where it had fallen and everything bearing an air of neglect.

I wondered if the prisoner suspected, and if a boat from the *Dragon* would attempt to follow us.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SWOOP OF THE HAWK

THE flood-tide was still running through the narrow inlet with the force of a mill-race, but the passage, having no rocks, was made without mishap.

Hereabouts the shore was as deserted as when Columbus discovered Cat Island; and as the trees on the main were thick, I had little fear of being seen from any point save Canoe Place, for it would be dark by the time we passed the head of Pond Quogue and opposite that narrow neck dividing Shinnecock Bay from the Great Peconic.

In an hour I took the oars from Rance and relieved his arms, and so we forged slowly along, close against the beach side of the bay, that we might not be seen from the ocean. It was a weary — weary pull in the overladen craft, and in my physical weakness, which I now felt more than ever, my arms seemed to draw from their sockets. Once, to ease them, I landed on the strip between the bay and the ocean

on the pretext of a desire to make sure of the whereabouts of the enemy.

The sun was then on the edge of the horizon; the wind had come, and the schooner. There was the *Dragon*, now almost opposite me, and not a mile from the beach, every sail and line of her as plain as if etched on the sky. She was making straight for the *Gloosecap*, now a speck in the distance, and her find would surprise her. We had done the only thing that could have saved us, but our margin of escape had been none too great.

It was deep dusk when we passed Canoe Place. Not a sail nor boat had we seen on the shallow Shinnecock, a thing not remarkable in those days of scanty settlement and when war had paralyzed industry. Later, tired yet hopeful, we passed the barren lift of sand called Shinnecock Hills, and so, on, feeling our way through the narrow waters of the eastern end of the bay and scaring the tall, blue herons from their nocturnal watch on the sedgy shallows.

If we had possessed sufficient food I would there have rested, hiding among the sand dunes of the beach, but nourishment was demanded. Our last crumb was gone and Dorothy was wan and pale from lack of nutriment, all she had been through, and perhaps the uncertainty of the future. A fine state,

that, for a girl to whom luxury had been but slightly different from necessity! But a few hours before she had been the petted child of flattery and devotion; now she was a proscribed wanderer doomed to the shortest of short commons and the companionship of a negro.

For myself, I felt half starved, but the nearer I drew to Sag Harbor the stronger I grew, though my strength was more of purpose than of body. We had had a twelve-mile pull in a heavy, deeply laden boat, and against an increasing wind. I was muscle-worn, sore, and weary when at last we drew the dingey to a final landing. It was as far as the boat could go, and now we must walk. Rance was a giant of strength and resource. Not a morsel of food had he taken, pressing his share on the girl, but the quantity of water he drank was prodigious. The great jug was empty.

Where we came ashore was a barren waste of sand and scrub, but with no delay we picked up the arms, leaving all else, and set out to find the road to Sag Harbor. It was a clear, star-lit night, the young moon having long since set, but there was sufficient radiance from the sky to mark the watercourses and the roughest places.

Rance led the way and set the pace, and I followed,

bearing up the girl, or entirely lifting her as I waded through a tide-run or stumbled over a bog.

I figured that it was midnight when we struck the road, and three in the morning when at last we came in sight of my old home. But then I was nigh to fainting from exhaustion; and my darling, who had not strength to speak for upward of an hour, was a dead weight on my arm, and scarce able to drag her feet. Everything about the place was as dark and as silent as death; and save that the house was closed tight below, with the blinds open above, I should have feared it was deserted, and my cousin gone. I no longer felt aggressive; my present demand being food and rest, especially the latter, and my physical requirements overtopped my lust for reprisal. I was totally spent. At that moment Carey Drummond might have bested me with a horsewhip, and I have sold my birthright for sleep and a meal.

And Dorothy — Heaven bless the girl! — was in no better state; even worse, for she had not been buoyed up by the most unholy of passions. She could not have gone another quarter of a mile.

This was my second home-coming, and with a vengeance in all its meaning; yet mixed with my hatred for my cousin was a feeling hardly in keeping with my evil thoughts of him. I was so reduced that

I might have broken down and shed tears of pity for myself, only there was the girl who had not uttered a moan or wet an eyelash through all her horrible experience.

There was no delay in entering Rance's house. It was a small log affair of but two rooms, with a shuttered window in each; one a kitchen into which the single outside door opened. At its side, but a few yards removed from it, was what had been a hog-pen, though it had long been disused as such. Like all such structures, the cabin was built more for shelter than for comfort, and its most striking interior feature was the great fireplace opening under the wide throat of the large stone chimney.

We did not attempt to make a light. The negro went to the barn and came back with an armful of hay, which he threw on the floor of the inner room, and this made the only bed my lady had that night.

But she seemed to wish no other. With a dry sob, she held up her face for a kiss, then sank to the rough couch, and I think went instantly to sleep. I closed her door and dropped heavily into an old rocking-chair; Rance disappeared.

In a moment I was in deep slumber. What became of the negro I did not then know, nor did I guess that he had lain down outside the door that he

might guard us. Heaven bless him! My heart warms to his memory as I think of those days and his absolute selflessness and devotion.

When I awoke it was by the light from the open door striking my eyes, and there stood Rance, his white teeth showing in a grin, a steaming pot in one hand, the other carrying a basket.

"Sorry to 'sturb you, Marse Talbot, but I reckon you an' Miss Do'othy need this here."

I suddenly jerked my stiffened muscles together and got to my feet. "What time is it?" I demanded.

"Ten o'clock, sah — an' the ole cat be gone down to de village. Dat what give me chance fo' de grub."

He smiled broadly.

"Has she gone to the post?"

"Reckon not, sah; not fo' dis nigger. Gone to gabble, I s'pec's."

"And she saw you?"

"Oh, yes, sah; but I 'low she doan' make much fuss over Rance. She call me lazy black nigger, an' ask where I been. I tol' her I been larkin' a spell. 'Tain't the fust time I goes away, sah. Den she dat mad she go fo' hit me with de mop handle, but she ain't almighty spry, she ain't."

The negro chuckled aloud as he spoke of my aunt's wrath.

"Have you seen Drummond?" I asked.

"Yes, sah. Marse Drummond down to bre'kfas'. He doan hab crutch now — only a cane. He cusses me black an' yaller fo' bein' gone so long, but I keep away from de cane, sah. Yes, sah! He sittin' smokin' on de back po'ch dis instep; dat's how I sneak out wif de vittles. Doan you t'ink you better get missy an' eat, sah? Dere's a heap I got to do yet!"

"By Heavens, I will go to him now!" I exclaimed, for sleep had brought back my nerve. But before I could cross the room Rance hurriedly laid his burden on the rough table and sprang between me and the door.

"Marse Talbot — Marse Talbot! You want to kill Miss Do'othy?" he cried. "I s'pec's you light-headed fo' need o' wittles, sah. You 'tack Marse Drummond in de daylight? No, sah! 'Tain't fo' no love ob him I speaks, but you git inter hole whar dis nigger can't help you. You'll 'larm de whole place, an' de ole cat'll nose us out. Wait till we ready to go, sah, den you brown his bacon fo' him. But now? De lan' sakes, chile, you better hang yo'self to de do'-post at once!"

His quaintly worded protest, albeit it was familiar enough, did more to bring me to reason than his logic, and that was strong. Moreover, I saw that on the back porch was no place to bring Carey Drummond to his just deserts. I had a thing or two to say to him, and must have him where he could give no alarm.

How Dorothy and I ate that morning!

It was glorious weather, as I remember; and the girl, refreshed by her sleep, lifted in spirits until she lifted me with her, albeit there was a grim purpose in my mind that kept me within bounds. Safe? Yes, I felt safe then, and saw no reason why our presence should be suspected until I was ready to open on Drummond. I saw that I must curb my impatience for vengeance until the coming night, unless, indeed, circumstances altered. Kill him? I did not know what I would do, though I was hot enough for it, but I surely would reduce him to a state beside which his wound would appear to be a trifle. And I fancy I did.

Perhaps it were well that the day should be passed in perfect rest. We all needed it; especially Dorothy. Bedraggled and disordered in dress, she was none the less beautiful to me. Freedom from the life she had led, and the fair prospect of our final escape,

were enough to buoy her young spirits, especially as they were backed by a perfectly healthy body.

It was noon when Rance left us to make arrangements for a boat, he taking one of the pistols. With the door of the cabin fastened the maiden and I waited, she sleeping at times, I on guard with the loaded musket, though I feared nothing in the way of attack. I could command a view of the house, but no one entered it until shortly after Rance had gone, and then I saw Deborah come from the direction of the village and go in. About two hours later, while Dorothy was sleeping and I was growing fairly drowsy under the brooding silence and lack of events, the spinster reappeared at the kitchen door and screamed loudly for Rance, and he not answering, she came rapidly to the cabin, striding along with lifted skirts, and plainly angry clear through.

When she found the place fastened she shook the door viciously and called repeatedly, then went away, muttering vengeance on the black. I thought little of her anger then, but did later.

She had not been back in the house ten minutes when I beheld Carey Drummond coming from it, a cane in one hand and a heavy dog-whip, or quirt, in the other. He made straight for the cabin, stumping along as fast as his wounded leg would let him,

while his sister waited near the house to keep in touch with what went forward.

All this I saw from the kitchen window, and then, feeling that something was in the wind, I aroused Dorothy, and together we watched the man as he came. He had improved in health and appearance. He was dressed partly in worn regimentals and partly in civilian's clothes, but his face now showed considerable color, which was perhaps due to anger at the negro's supposed indolence and impudence in refusing to appear on his sister's demand. He still walked lame, though he hurried like one inflamed over an outrage, and was doubtless on his way to teach Rance a lesson in a manner mighty common in those days, and since.

As he drew near I recognized the matter of it. So Mohammed was coming to the mountain! My opportunity was made for me and at hand, and in a low voice I told Dorothy to return to the inner room and not come out until called; then I went to the outer door, took the plug from the latch, thus leaving the place easy of access, but so stationed myself that the door would cover me when opened. I thought of closing the blind to the window, but had not time to do it unobserved; moreover, I would need light.

In a moment I heard Drummond's cane smiting

the path. Instead of at once trying the door, he peered in through the open window, a tiny affair, but all he could see was the closed inner room. Swearing a great oath, he called for the negro, and not being answered struck the door with his cane. Probably to his great astonishment it fell ajar, and pushing it open he walked in.

Instantly I closed the door behind him and put back the plug in the latch.

Then I faced him.

It was evident that he did not at first know me, and his astonishment at beholding what he thought was a British officer in the negro's cabin might have been ludicrous under other circumstances. He stood in the center of the floor, fairly agape, looking at me from head to foot, and for a space neither of us spoke.

At length I broke the silence.

"I have been hoping to see you, sir," I began. "I was about to go to you, but you have kindly saved me the trouble by coming here."

"Who — who are you, sir? and what are you doing in this place?" he asked, with something like assurance.

"I am the bearer of a letter to you," I said. "A letter of great interest, and touching you closely."

“And why — why are you in hiding here — on my property?”

“I think the letter will explain,” I interrupted quietly; and taking from my pocket the damnable communication directed to Sir John Dirck, I presented it to him with a bow.

He did not stop to look at the superscription, but opened the worn paper and began to read. But he had not gone three lines into it when he dropped the letter and raising his head, looked hard at me, his face beginning to pale.

I neither moved nor spoke, only standing there returning his gaze.

Then he knew me. I was perfectly aware of it, for his lips turned fairly blue, and his eyes grew wide with an expression of horror, or as a man's eyes will widen when he comes face to face with the prospect of his sudden death.

I had not speculated on what he would do when he found himself confronting me, he whom he hoped to hear of as in the next world. Perhaps to him I was a ghost, which, like Banquo's, would not down; but whether he thought me quick or dead, the abject cowardice of his nature leaped to the surface and, with a limping jump, he got to the open window.

Before I had gathered his intention he shouted for help.

Three times did his cry ring out, with the crisp clearness of a series of shots:

“ Help — help — help! ”

It was the one thing I had not figured on, his crying out for assistance before he more than recognized me, and for the moment I forgot that his sister stood where she could hear him. At his yell my self-restraint left me. The pent anger of days broke its dam and burst out. I was on him with a bound.

Grasping his throat with both hands I choked off his attempt to cry out again, shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat, banging his head against the logs of the wall, then I flung him sidewise, and he went to the floor with a crash.

Seizing the dog-whip which he had dropped, I cut him once across the shoulders, then stood over him and let him gather his half-gone senses.

“ And what have you to say now, you hound? ” I cried.

“ For the love of — ”

“ Get up and sit in that chair,” I said. “ Else I’ll lash you where you lie.”

He crawled to the chair like the dog he was, and cringed before me like a whipped cur.

"What have you to say?" I again demanded, but he made no reply.

Bringing the lash down across his legs with a force that made him scream, I repeated the question.

"I have nothing to say — nothing!" he shot out. "In the devil's name, how came you here?"

"It is for you to know that I come from the dead to punish you," I retorted. "It is for your comfort to know that I have been in New York, that I made way with Quince, and have likely killed the man to whom you wrote that pleasant letter. Aye, with the sword at my side; and may Heaven save me from killing you with it, as you deserve. Did you really take me for the simple fool I posed as? Did you think I trusted you? Was your greed so great that you would sell your flesh and blood for a few acres? You have lost in all, and all through your cursed cupidity! For two weeks I have held my life in my hands, and because of you. Do you hope to escape punishment? No, by the Lord! Dorothy!"

At my call the door of the little room opened, and the girl stood there, her figure framed by the blackness beyond.

Drummond's eyes blinked when he saw her, but he

spoke not a single word. I believe her coming saved me from killing him, or perhaps it was his abject cowardice. Then, again, it came to me that to kill a lamed and unarmed man would be no glorious achievement. My spleen had been somewhat relieved by my own violence of speech and act. At all events, I only drew my sword that I might be ready for any move of his.

As the steel came out, thinking I was going to put an end to him even before the girl, he put up his hands and fairly begged for his life. Not to me did he speak, but to Dorothy, and I never heard a more groveling prayer for mercy. I never dreamed a mortal could be so lost to pride.

He confessed to everything, even to how he had hoped to defraud the girl of the estate when he thought it hers; for my being hanged had been a foregone conclusion with him. He promised to leave the country, and even resign his commission in the army. In the end I felt more like kicking than killing him, but I did not know that in his black heart he depended on one who had more spirit than himself. I mean his sister.

I did not promise to spare him, but I gave him wormwood in a short recital of what I had been through and accomplished, and it was with an unholy

joy I marked the fellow cringe. What to do with him was a matter already settled in my mind. I would confine him in the inner room and then go after Deborah, but just as I was finishing my story I heard running feet, and at once Rance was banging at the door and calling my name aloud. I let him in, wondering at his lack of wit, but soon knew wit was not lacking.

CHAPTER XXIII

BESIEGED

“**M**ARSE TALBOT!” he cried, springing into the room, his eyes twice their normal size as they seemed starting from his head. He did not notice Drummond.

“What is it?” I demanded, as he slammed the door.

“’Fo’ Gawd, Marse Talbot, we’s caught fo’ sho’ now! De ole cat know where you is an’ has done brung up de sojers! I see ’em as I come across de meadow!” Then for the first time taking note of Drummond, his jaw fell and he started backward.

As the negro finished his speech in breathless haste my cousin jumped to his feet. I saw his act, and swinging around on him, put my sword to his chest. “Sit down!” I shouted. “Sir, I will say again what I said when I came upon you two weeks ago: If this house is beset and forced, you shall die before I am taken! Rance, can you lay hands on a stout line?”

The negro nodded, but appeared unable to speak.

“Get it, and tie this fellow hand and foot. If he resists, shoot him. By Heaven, some one will pay for this.”

But for all my bearing, I was dumfounded. To have my revenge and be so near final safety, and then be balked by an old woman! She had doubtless heard her brother's cry for help, and had shown her sense by at once alarming the post, without a hint to us of what she was about to do. She could not have known what had occurred.

Perhaps the fear of me was upon her; but certain it was that her brother was in trouble, and that was enough for her. Unconscious of the importance of her act, she had turned the tables on us, having possessed more brains than I had given her credit for.

Leaving the prisoner to Rance, who I was sure would not be over-tender to him, beside, believing he was thoroughly cowed, as he had sunk back in his chair as obedient as a child, and telling Dorothy I would be back in a moment, I ran from the cabin to the road and looked toward the village. The negro had been right. The dust raised by their coming did not hide the flash of steel and the red coats of the squad of five men. They were not running, though they marched briskly, headed by one who proved to be a non-commissioned officer. As I saw them I

knew that my security had only been fancied; that my hellish desire for vengeance had reacted on myself.

But I would not and could not tamely submit, though to retreat to the open and attempt flight or fight were suicidal. Even to go to the house would be equally foolish as the larger structure would be less easily defended than the smaller. It came to me that I had not been seen by Deborah, and that she had but an imperfect knowledge of what had occurred in the cabin. Perhaps I might do something in my guise of a British officer, by pretending that I had happened on the scene and found the real culprit flown, and by directing a false pursuit, open a line for escape.

But just as I was formulating such a hopeless scheme I heard a shriek from the cabin. It was followed quickly by an explosion, and a bullet whizzed so close to my head that it lifted a lock of hair. I turned with a jerk, and the sight that met my eyes brought me up short, for a moment obliterating all appreciation of the coming danger.

Drummond was in the cabin door, a musket smoking in his hand, showing it was he who had shot at me. Dorothy, whose shriek I had heard, had grappled with him in the tiger-like fury a woman may

know in moments of desperation. Rance was not in sight.

As I took a step forward, thereby showing I was uninjured, my cousin tore himself loose from the girl, and grasping her by the throat threw her to the ground, where she lay motionless; then seeing me coming toward him he flung down the musket and started for the house on a limping run.

I saw it all, and all at once; and with now no thought of anything but the present, and not caring at that moment if the whole British army was at my heels, I dragged out my rapier and went after him. But ere I had gone two rods my vengeance was taken from me — and by Rance. Drummond had by then fled half way to the house, and I was hot on his trail, all sense of mercy dead in me, when I saw the negro stagger from the cabin door with a pistol in his hand. As he reached a spot where he could command a view of the flying man he dropped to one knee, and sighting the pistol with both hands as though it were a gun, fired.

At the report Drummond staggered a few paces and fell forward on his face, and I, thinking the shot had killed him, altered my course for the cabin.

There was now no more than time to get well under

cover, and lifting Dorothy, who was already attempting to rise, I bore her into the log hut, and on turning to speak to Rance, found he had disappeared. The girl was uninjured save for the shock of her fall, but she was too breathless to speak. Her eyes held a look of horror I well understood, but I did not then attempt to question her.

I ran out of the door and regained the musket. Drummond was by then attempting to get up, and seeing him yet alive I was about to go to him, for God knows what, when I heard a shout and saw the squad of Redcoats turning in from the road on a run, and behind them marked Deborah hurrying along.

I did a foolish and unnecessary thing then, a thing born of my desperation and belief there was nothing else to do. As the men swung in from the highway I opened the war by firing my pistol. I saw no one fall as a result, but it brought them to a sudden halt and gave the officer in charge an insight into the nature of the case. As I fired I jumped back into the cabin and closed its door, and only in time to avoid the bullet that slapped into the heavy planking, but there was no rush to take me by storm, an attempt which could not have failed of final success. This caution was due to the fact that the officer knew

nothing of the number with which he had to contend, but with a soldier's instinct he immediately placed his force out of the line of my fire. Here was a style of warfare which, as a British "regular" the man was unfamiliar with, and I afterward learned from him that seeing Drummond wounded, and having been promptly met by a shot, he had concluded there had been a whale-boat raid from Connecticut, the negro's quarters being a rallying point then holding a number of men. He was wrong in effect, but, had he known it, his fears were prophetic.

From the temporary security of the cabin I heard the officer, who I now saw was a sergeant, order his force to surround the house and keep under cover, but allow no one to escape therefrom, then, with a fine disregard of his own danger, he ran to where Drummond was sitting on the grass, his hand pressed to his shoulder.

This I saw from the window while feverishly reloading musket and pistol. Deborah had already gained her brother's side, and I marked the three talking; I heard the spinster shriek, and saw her throw up her skinny arms as she heard my cousin's story, and then I saw the officer lift the wounded man and assist him into the house. I might have shot either man as they walked, but I did not; it seemed

too much like murder, and I was no longer crazed by anger.

Yet Dorothy and I were in a tight position, and I could find no way out of it. The cabin was beset, and broad daylight was yet over the land. I hardly thought we would be assaulted by the small force on hand, for my personality and desperation were probably known by this. But there were a hundred men to draw upon at the post, and even without them we would soon be reduced by starvation. Though I despaired I was in no mood to surrender. I might have done so had I been other than I was, but as a proscribed spy and a deserter there could be but one ending to such a move, for I could not be looked upon as a prisoner of war.

As an hour passed and no attempt was made either to assault the cabin or demand a parley I had time to steady myself and consider my position, and saw that partial measures on either side were now impossible. I must fight until I fell — fight with bare hands, if necessary. And Dorothy? She must choose between self-destruction and submission, if it came to that. Drummond's personal act had in no-wise altered matters; it had been my own impatient desire, and now my cowardly cousin had doubtless made it plain that a great prize lay beleaguered in the

negro's quarters. And, strange to say, it was the knowledge of the prize that was holding off the officer, and that for the best of reasons. He dared not assault, knowing my desperation, as he wished to get the credit of taking me alive.

As we stood awaiting events I asked the brave girl at my side how my cousin's attempt to shoot me had come about. She said that while Rance was cutting a cord from a tangled mass that lay in a corner and had once supported a bed, and while she was about to tell him she would do it for him, Drummond, seeing his opportunity, had jumped from his chair, and seizing the musket left standing against the wall, had struck the bending negro a blow on the head with its stock, dazing but not stunning him, owing to the thickness of the African's skull. Then she saw my cousin run to the door, where he stopped and took deliberate aim at me where I stood in the road. Divining his intention she had shrieked and thrown herself on him.

"And undoubtedly saved my life — for a time," I said.

"And my own — for now what were mine without yours? I fancy I was stunned for a minute when Carey threw me, for I did not see Rance come out nor hear his shot."

"I cannot imagine what has become of him," I said. "Of one thing I am sure: he has not deserted us to save himself. There is nothing to do but to wait — and fight in the end. And —"

At that moment I marked the sergeant come out of the door with a white napkin tied to the point of his sword. He waved it a few times, then marched straight toward us. I allowed him to come within a few steps of the cabin, then called on him to halt, which he promptly did.

"What do you want?" I demanded.

"Be ye Talbot Marcy?"

"I am."

"Then I call on ye to surrender in the name o' the king."

"An easy demand, since I have no king," I returned. "What terms do you offer?"

"None whatever, sir, to such as ye," was the reply.

"Then I refuse," I returned; "and if that be all, I'll give you one minute to get beyond my fire."

"Ye had best listen to reason, sir," said the man. "We have ye well bottled and can take our time about pulling the cork. I have sent for my captain and more men. You have no chance, sir."

"Your time is getting on," I replied briefly.

"Well, then," he said, without betraying the least

hurry or fear; "as ye see fit to make a slaughter-pen of the place I would ask for the nigger an' the lady. It is no situation for the likes of her."

"I will speak for the negro," I said. "He will not surrender. As for the lady, she can speak for herself." I turned to Dorothy. "I cannot surrender," I said, "but I doubt if harm would come to you."

"I would rather die than give up now," she answered simply. "What would they do with me when word comes from New York, as it will, for Major Dirck is not dead?"

"God's will be done!" was all I could say in return. "You heard that?" I asked of the brave man without.

"I did, sir; but I would advise you —"

"I'll give you until I can count twenty," I interrupted. "If you are then in sight I will fire at you." And I began to count. He turned then, but he did not hurry in his retreat to the house.

After this episode we waited in a surrounding silence that seemed portentous, but no move was made against the cabin. Once I saw the sergeant go to the door and look down the road, but the reënforcements we both expected did not come — reënforcements against one man and a girl! I might have laughed,

only I was not mirthful just then. Not another soul did I see, nor so much as a head showed where the men surrounding us were concealed. Stress under inaction became more and more irksome, and I wished something would happen to relieve me of the ceaseless strain. My nerves were now like fiddlestrings, and I had a growing desire to yell. Dorothy and I had ceased from talking. She stood at one window, pistol in hand, and I at the other with pistol and musket, while spread on the table was the ammunition ready for use.

Finally the sun went down in a gorgeous setting of crimson and gold and blue, and as darkness finally settled in the house I looked for something to occur, having in mind a possible surprise with which I could not contend.

And a surprise did come, but not of the nature expected. It had grown pitch black in the cabin, though there was a glimmer outside, and I knew that later, if not already, the line around us would be contracted. I was just thinking of the desperate possibility of sneaking from the door and stealing, Indian fashion, along the ground, when through the intense stillness I heard my name called in a strident whisper:

“ Marse Talbot! ”

“For God’s sake! Rance! Where are you?” I shouted, regardless of those without.

For an answer there came the sound of a body crashing into the dead embers of the fireplace, and then I knew the negro had dropped down the wide chimney. He was on his feet in an instant.

“’Fo’ Gawd, I was afraid you’d shoot me, Marse Talbot!” he said.

“I was about to,” I answered. “It’s small charity to welcome you back to such a condition of affairs, but I am mighty glad you are here. Where have you been?”

“Been to de barn; been to de house; been in de hog-pen; den ’lowed I could git here t’rough de chim-bly, so I clom up to de roof. It was easy ’nough!”

“To the house?” I exclaimed, astonished at his statement.

“Not at fust, Marse Talbot. I done run to de barn after I shot, an’ ’spected you an’ missy would come, too; but I soon know you be penned. Den Rance t’ought he better stay where he was. Damn sorry it happened, sah. I had it all fixed for to git away, but couldn’t say anything while Marse Drummond was around. He gave me a crack dat made me dizzy fo’ a minnit, but I reckon Rance cook his goose fo’ him.”

“ You had what fixed? ” I asked, more than touched at the devotion of the black who was risking his life for us.

“ Why, sah; I ’lowed to git ole Mose’s cat-boat, an’ Mose he say we could hab um. But she high an’ dry till de flood at midnight, sah. I ’lowed de time jest suit.”

I listened in a bitter spirit as I saw how my passion had destroyed our chances. “ And you were on your way back when you saw the soldiers? ”

“ Yes, sah. When I saw Miss Debby lopin’ be-hin’ dem I knew de troof. Cuss dat ole cat! She spile all! Will dey hang me with you, Marse Talbot? ”

“ If they get us, I think they will; but it shall never come to that with me,” I answered. “ And you should not have deliberately run into certain danger by coming back here, Rance. You might have easily escaped.”

“ I jest nachully sooner be shot, sir,” he returned, ignoring my last remark; “ an’ if it do come to dat, I’s goin’ to sen’ some pusson ahead to tell Peter dis nigger is on de way.”

There was no doubt of the black’s determination, and it looked as if we were to die together; nor could I have entered the next world in more honorable com-

pany. But it did not come to that, else I would not be writing this memoir. I was curious as to how he got into the house, and asked him.

“Sneak ober on my belly, sah, when it got dark. Didn’t fin’ out much, but specks dey won’t attack until more sojers come, an’ dey seem dreadful backward, sah. Den I crawl out to the hog-pen, den to de roof. I had big idee, Marse Talbot. You listen to me. We wait till ’bout ten o’clock, an’ if dey doan ’tack by dat time dis nigger will git up de chimbly, snake hisself off to de orchard, an’ shoot two pistols. Clar to goodness dey t’ink dey’s ’tacked from de rear, an’ go look. Den you an’ missy crawl out de do’ an’ sneak fo’ de shore. Or, sah, I go to de house an’ set fire to it. Dat will take dere ’tention.”

Here was pure generalship. As a desperate alternative either of his plans might work. And I now saw how easy my own escape might be had I been alone. If Rance could come and go so might I; but there was the girl to whom such an attempt was impossible, and I did not dream of leaving her.

What those outside were waiting for I might guess at, but why they were compelled to wait I did not know until afterward. I did not know that the night of May 22nd, 1777, was to go down in history, nor

that my act in taking Howe's dispatches to Tallmadge two weeks before, while it had precipitated a mort of trouble, had laid a train of events which was to end in our rescue.

For, undreamed of by any of us, there was a small force of determined Guilford men, under Colonel Meigs, crossing the Sound that afternoon. The gallant officer had received his instructions from Tallmadge, they being based on the information I had furnished, and now, advancing in whale-boats, their object was to destroy the stores and storehouses at Sag Harbor. Had I known this it would have saved me from many gray hairs coming before their time.

Even as I stood listening to the suggestions of the negro, he and I at one window, Dorothy being at the other, all prepared from a rush from without; even then, I say, the patriot force were hauling their boats across the strip of land at Orient to launch them again on Gardiners Bay. No alarm had been given, though one half-hearted fisherman had seen them and, in the hope of reward, had hurried to the officer commanding the post; but the latter astute individual (it was not Captain Archibald Harvey) being then deep in a game of loo, with a bottle at his elbow, had promptly scouted the story, having been before deceived by false alarms. To his ignorance of my con-

sequence I also owe thanks; for when the brave sergeant who held me at bay sent a man to report the nature of the desperado he had besieged, the soldier had neglected to mention the list of my crimes, only asking for reënforcements to capture one, Marcy, and with typical British short-sightedness, the commander had sent back word that he considered six men as amply sufficient to capture one man, a woman and a nigger.

Up to sunset not a Redcoat had presented himself as a mark, nor had a shot been fired at the house since the harmless answer to my first. But I had no doubt that a force lay in the surrounding shrubbery, waiting for use, and to send Rance through their line to fire the house and then make a demonstration from the orchard seemed about the only thing to do. It was somewhere near nine o'clock and Rance was impatient to be off, while Dorothy was urging me to go with him and make good my escape, leaving her to the mercy of her captors to whom she would surrender, when suddenly on the quiet air came the rattle of distant musketry followed by quick, dropping shots, and in a minute or two, as I stood there with my love in my arms, I saw the eastern sky turn red with fire.

Even then I did not guess the truth; but when the



I SAW THE EASTERN SKY TURN RED WITH FIRE.

red had turned to orange, and I marked a coil of tintured smoke roll upward, it came to me that some house in the village was in flames.

Following hard on this there sounded a ruffle of rapid hoof-beats on the road, coming nearer and nearer, until a horse clattered into the open before the house, and stopped. I could see neither horse nor rider, but I heard the latter cry: "Sergeant! sergeant! Fetch up your men! The rebels are on us — a horde of them!"

I heard the house-door fly open, and the heavy tread of a man on the veranda, then more shouts and a hurried explanation, unnecessary with the sinister light in the sky. Now there came more shots in the distance, and the heavens flared under a great burst of flame. There came a loud order from the sergeant as he called his men from ambush, and I could hear them crash through the underbrush. In the ensuing confusion I caught Deborah's voice from the house door, but no attention was paid to her, and a moment or two later the thud of running feet and the diminishing clicking of metal against metal told me the squad were hurrying down the road. Then I tore open the cabin door, and grasping Dorothy by the arm stepped into the night. Rance, crouched like an Indian, sped after the retreating troops.

I knew we were saved, but it is beyond my pen to adequately express what the following two hours were to me, nor can I describe the almost sickening effects of the relief that came on having the oppressing load of imminent destruction suddenly shifted. The raid, which had been planned and executed with skill, and which had by chance rescued me from otherwise certain death, was entirely successful. I bid you read history to know how Meigs crossed the Sound; how he destroyed three storehouses and a British ship lying at the wharf, captured ninety-eight officers and men, and, having forever rid Sag Harbor of its scarlet pest, returned to Guilford that night at twelve o'clock, and without the loss of a man.

It had been part my doing, but it was to Meigs that Congress gave the sword of recognition. I cared little for either sword or praise for myself, but when I met the colonel later that night, and he learned who I was and what I had done, he was cordial enough and openly gave me the credit due me, also promising to use his influence in obtaining for me the reward I wished. But that is almost another yarn of itself.

From the cabin I went to the house and created consternation by my appearance. We found my wounded cousin in bed from his new hurt, which, however, was hardly more than flesh deep and not

necessarily dangerous. Both he and his sister were now humble enough, being mightily surprised at their sudden desertion by the soldiers, and afraid of what I might do to them, Carey being in a panic until he saw I was not bloodthirsty. I was no longer hot against him, being too elated over our narrow escape and knowing that even should the troops return we would be gone. When Drummond learned he had been shot by Rance (for he had thought it was I who fired), he swore he would have the boy's life; but I soon quieted him by assuring him that I would make an end to him then and there if he did not curb his tongue.

As for Deborah, she was torn between her hatred of me and a desire to conciliate Dorothy, whom she fawned over, thinking, perhaps, that her fate lay in the girl's hands; but the woman was so mean-spirited that I had no feeling for her save contempt.

It was after eleven when Rance suddenly appeared. The girl and I were then eating as if we had never eaten before. The negro told us of what had happened, and that Colonel Meigs was preparing to return to Connecticut before the alarm of his raid should reach Canoe Place and arouse the British there. The news decided me. I felt that I had urgent business with him, so taking Dorothy with me,

with Rance bringing up the rear, we started for the village.

It was years before I entered my own house again. I saw my loving cousins once, while in Jersey, to which place they returned, he broken in health and purse and complaining of the meagerness of the pitance I allowed him, and she sinking into senile dementia.

I have told how Colonel Meigs received me, and a rougher but more honorable man I never knew. Back to Connecticut we went with him, Dorothy, Rance and I; and it was on that trip that I made the acquaintance of the defeated commander, and Captain Harvey, and learned something of the foregoing events of that memorable night.

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And now I have but little more to tell.

Washington received Howe's paper in time, but you know how he was worsted on the Brandywine, and, later, at Germantown. I was with him at Valley Forge, and wondered that his heart did not break; but great hearts do not break.

I served him and loved him; and when the war was ended I went home to Dorothy, my wife, and my title to my father's estate was confirmed by the State.

As for Direk, I never saw him again, but I heard of him. After the war and his return to England he went so far as to write to Dorothy and congratulate her on her marriage with a man for whom he had then nothing but respect. So much for him.

Rance is now white headed and decrepit, and calls me "colonel"; and some time I may tell how I obtained my rank, but not now.

And Dorothy? Need I say more than that her heart still beats close to mine, as warm and as true as ever. When she is very, very severe she takes my now lined face between her hands and calls me her "bird of prey"; and when she is tender and reminiscent she goes to the attic with her children and shows them the old cabin door with a musket ball imbedded in the thick plank, and tells what she suffered and endured when she took part in the swoop of the hawk.



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